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7th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit Exercise-2024 opened at the National Counter Terrorism Centre at Pabbi.

New PM to take oath of office by March 1

ISLAMABAD (INP): The country's new prime minister will take oath of his office by March 1, 2024, it was learnt on Sunday.

President Arif Alvi will administer the oath at a ceremony to be held at the President's House either on February 29 (Thursday) or March 1 (Friday).

Before that either on February 28 or February 29, the newly elected members of the National Assembly (MNAs) will elect leader of the House through 'show of hands'.

Shehbaz stresses joint efforts against poverty, unemployment, ignorance

LAHORE (INP): President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and prime minister-designate Shehbaz Sharif has stressed the need of joint efforts to get rid the country of poverty, unemployment and ignorance.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that political stability was of significance importance for economic stability in the country.

Shehbaz Sharif said that the today need of national unity for political

and economic stability was greater than it was felt every before in the country's history.

He said that adopting the attitude of simplicity and frugality, we would have to spend maximum resources on welfare of the people.

The PM designate said that political stability and a peaceful atmosphere were extremely important for attracting foreign investment.

He said that Pakistan will be prosperous only

when all its units were prosperous.

Shehbaz Sharif said that he has set a bright example of economic development and stability in the past and practical and concrete measures will be taken to improve the economy.

He said, "Alive nations face challenges and difficulties with bravery and hardwork."

We will move forward together and solve the problems faced by the country."

Health, education facilities critical for women empowerment: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi said the provision of health and education facilities were critical factors for achieving the goal of women's empowerment. He underscored the need for the provision of a harassment-free environment to women so that they could become part of the workforce and contribute to economic growth.

The President expressed these views while speaking at the 5th edition of the HUM Women Leaders Award 2024.

The President said, "Today we celebrate women leaders for their endeavors and men who contributed to the economic

empowerment of women."

Talking about the rights of women, he cited the saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who said that a man who raised two daughters earned his place in paradise.

President Dr Arif Alvi stated that women in human societies, through the ages, were epitome of love and hope and they taught children love and kept the family system intact. He pointed out that women suffered the most in wars and acts of genocide, adding millions lost their lives in genocides in the previous centuries.

The President criticized the acts of genocide

by Israeli forces in Gaza, saying that thousands of women and children were killed.

The President further said genocide was committed in Gaza for the vested interests and in negation of humanitarian values.

The President said that the Pakistani nation had capability to overcome challenges as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic, through collective efforts and Pakistan remained the third most successful country in tackling the deadly disease.

He urged the nation to work together and forge unity to address the numerous challenges including

poverty, malnutrition, stunting and maternal and neonatal deaths.

The President lamented that more than 26 million children in the country were still out of school. In comparison, enrollment of children in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India were higher, he mentioned.

He said China focused on health and education sectors to lift 700 million people out of poverty and Pakistan should adopt the same path. The President also lauded the nation, particularly women and youth for their participation in the voting process during the general election.

Speaking on the occasion, First Lady Samina

Alvi commended the efforts of organizers and added that these awards recognized and encouraged our unsung heroes, our sisters for their valuable contribution in different walks of life. She urged women to come forward to avail the easy loans offered by banks for setting up businesses.

Organizer of the Award Show, President Hum Television Sultana Siddiqui, said that the Women Leaders Awards were organized every year to acknowledge the role of women and facilitate women leaders and entrepreneurs who overcome obstacles through continuous struggle and made their mark in their respective fields.



ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi, in a group photograph, with the organizers & recipients of the awards at the 5th edition of HUM Women Leaders Awards-2024 ceremony held at the Jinnah Convention Center.

International PATS exercise kicks off in Pabbi

Independent Report

RAWALPINDI: The opening ceremony of 7th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024 was held at National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) Pabbi, today. Director General Military Training opened the 60 hours long Patrolting Exercise which aims at enhancing military to military cooperation under complex international security environment. A total of 20 friendly countries including military observers are participating in the event. Major participants include Pakistan, Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America and Uzbekistan while Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Myanmar, Germany, Indonesia, Japan and Oman will witness the exercise as military observers.

Pakistan Army Team Spirit is a mission specific and task oriented professional military exercise organised annually in Pakistan. The exercise calls for highest standard of physical fitness, mental agility/robustness and professional military expertise for varied decision making in varied situations during conduct of challenging missions in near real environment.

Khurshid affirms Gillani's candidacy for Senate Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan People's Party senior leader Syed Khurshid Shah on Sunday confirmed that Yousaf Raza Gillani will be the PPP's candidate for the chairman Senate's seat.

Talking to a private news channel, he addressed speculation surrounding the chairman Senate's office, asserting that no such decision has been made regarding Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar's potential nomination for the position.

Additionally, Shah reiterated the PPP's commitment to supporting Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for the prime minister's election, emphasizing that the party's stance was based on principles rather than self-interest.

Responding to queries about the party's decision to abstain from joining the cabinet, Shah emphasized the PPP's dedication to upholding democratic values.

PPP secures speaker, deputy speaker slots in Sindh Assembly

Awais Qadir Shah pledges unbiased attitude irrespective of party affiliation

KARACHI (INP): Members of the Sindh Assembly through a secret ballot on Sunday elected PPP's Owais Qadir Shah and Anthony Naveed as speaker and deputy speaker, respectively.

Out of a total of 147 votes cast on Sunday, Shah secured 111 votes while MQM-P's Sofia Shah clinched 36. Meanwhile, Naveed also secured 111 votes while MQM-P's Advocate Rashid Khan won 36.

The development comes a day after as many as 147 legislators-elect of the PPP and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) were sworn in as members of the 16th provincial assembly.

Outgoing Sindh Assembly speaker, Agha Siraj Durrani, administered the oath to 111 PPP members and 36 from the MQM-P on Saturday. Notably absent were nine PTI-backed independent candidates, three from the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) and two

from Jamaat-i-Islami, all protesting the election outcome.

Meanwhile the newly elected Speaker of the Sindh Assembly, Syed Awais Qadir Shah, pledged on Sunday to show an unbiased attitude towards MPAs, irrespective of their party affiliation.

Soon after taking the oath, he invited them to work together for the welfare of the people. Awais, who polled 111 votes in the election for the post of Speaker, thanked his party leadership for nominating him as Speaker.

He also expressed his gratitude for the support of the people in electing him as MPA. The speaker said that it was a proud moment for him. He said this assembly passed a resolution for the creation of the nation. The father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, sat in this assembly, adding that Liaquat Ali Khan waved the Pakistani flag here.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman meeting with leader of the house in Senate Ishaq Dar.

Human error blamed for 2020 Karachi plane crash

KARACHI (INP): The PIA investigation board has released an inquiry report into the Karachi plane on Sunday, which claimed 99 lives, four years after the heart-wrenching tragedy. Amid lack of coordination, human error was reported to be the main cause of the crash, said the inquiry report. The final investigation report was released by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board regarding PIA Airbus A320 nearly four years after the crash that claimed 99 lives on May 22, 2020.

The report clearly said there was a lack of communication and harmony be-

tween the two pilots and air traffic controllers. It further revealed that four times before landing, the air traffic controller stopped the pilot from landing, telling him that the plane's key height was too high. For the fifth time, the air traffic controller allowed for landing. However, the air traffic controller did not tell the pilot that the plane's engine hit the runway and burst into flames during the first landing attempt.

Moreover, for the first landing, the airplane's landing gears were opened, however at the second landing time one of the pilots again closed the landing gear.



ISLAMABAD: 7th consignment of relief goods being dispatched for the people of Gaza from Government of Pakistan.

Decides to prolong protest all over province: Protest sit-in of 4-Parties Alliance ends in Quetta

Independent Report

QUETTA: The protest sit-in (dharana) being staged by the four Parties Alliance in front of Deputy Commissioner's office for last 17 days came to an end on Sunday afternoon.

The four Parties Alliance comprising Balochistan National Party (BNP), Pashtoonkhaw Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), National Party and Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) had started dharana against alleged rigging in the elections and change in the results of different constituencies of the province.

Speaking to the media, a leader of Balochistan National Party, Ghulam Nabi Marri told that we recorded our protest in democratic manner by staging protest sit-in in front of the office of Deputy Commissioner / District Returning Officer Quetta. However, no one paid hearing to our protest, Mr. Marri maintained.

He also said that the four Parties Alliance has decided to expand the protest in the province after ending it in Quetta.

Aneeq visits Jamia Abi Bakar Al Islamia

Independent Report

KARACHI: The Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Mr. Aneeq Ahmed, visited Jamia Abi Bakar Al Islamia Karachi as the chief guest, delivering an insightful address on the profound teachings of Islam and Sunnah.

In his address, Minister Aneeq Ahmed underscored the pivotal role of understanding Islam and Sunnah for the prosperity of a nation. He fervently encouraged the audience to actively engage with the Quran, urging them to delve into its meaning and integrate its teachings into their daily lives.

PML-N leaders say to contact all parties for grand dialogue

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ayaz Sadiq has said he and Khawaja Saad Rafique will go to the leadership of all political parties for initiating a grand dialogue to steer the country out of crises.

Addressing the party workers here on Sunday, he said the PML-N and its allies would make all possible efforts to tackle the gigantic challenges facing the country currently. He said he and Kh Saad Rafique wished that all political forces get united on common points of the national interest. He hoped that all other political parties would also like to join hands to overcome problems facing the common man and the country.

Former National Assembly speaker said the government job was to conduct legislative and developmental works and the opposition could criticise it. However, that criticism should be constructive, he said.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed being presented with memento during his visit to Jamia Abi Bakar Al Islamia Karachi

Maryam Nawaz poised to make history as Punjab to elect CM today

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Assembly is set to witness a one-to-one contest for the post of chief minister (CM) tomorrow (Monday) as nomination papers of PML-N nominee Maryam Nawaz and Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Rana Aftab were declared valid after scrutiny.

Sunday noon was the deadline, announced by newly-elected Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmed Khan for submission of nomination papers for the post.

Malik Ahmed Khan did the verification of nomination papers. He said that the election for the

coveted slot will be held in tomorrow's assembly session.

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.

Meanwhile, PTI - at the eleventh hour - named Rana Aftab Ahmed Khan as its new candidate for the post following the provincial police's attempt to arrest its earlier nominee, Mian Aslam Iqbal.

Speaker to summon NA session on Feb 29 if president doesn't: Dar

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Senator Ishaq Dar, has asserted that if President Dr Arif Alvi fails to summon a National Assembly session, the constitutional prerogative allows the Speaker to convene the session on February 29.

Dar, addressing the media outside the Punjab Assembly, emphasised that according to constitutional mandates, a session of the National Assembly must be called within 21 days from the date of gen-

eral elections, thereby underscoring the urgency of the matter.

He further highlighted that this principle extends to provincial assemblies as well, clarifying that if a governor fails to summon the session of a provincial assembly, similar procedures can be followed.

The former finance minister refrained from delving into the intricacies of economic strategies, suggesting that such discussions are better suited for more appropriate forums.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Pipeline progress

The outgoing caretaker government has decided to move forward with the much-delayed Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, and the incoming administration will be required to take further diplomatic and legal steps so that the scheme is no longer hindered. The Cabinet Committee on Energy on Friday decided to construct an 80km stretch of the pipeline running from the Iranian border to Gwadar. The Iranians have built the pipeline at their end, but Pakistan has been unable to start work on its side of the border, apparently due to concerns of attracting US sanctions. The interim administration seems to have made the decision considering Iran's option of moving the International Court of Arbitration, which could bring a \$18bn penalty for Pakistan, as the state had issued a sovereign guarantee for the project.

The caretaker set-up's move should bring some clarity regarding the project's future. First agreed to in 2009, the scheme has been in limbo mainly because successive governments here have failed to take a concrete decision on its fate. The caretaker administration had consulted neutral foreign experts on the issue, who had said that while the scheme could attract US sanctions, Pakistan's citing of force majeure to justify its inability to proceed with the scheme was a weak defence. Therefore, executing the project was preferable. With regard to the incoming rulers, the PML-N in its latest election manifesto has also cited its desire to "enhance economic and energy ties" with Iran, specifically mentioning the oil and gas sectors. Hence, there should be no contradictions between the caretaker administration's decision and the new rulers' policies.

The fact is that Pakistan needs regular and affordable access to natural gas. Dwindling local supplies cannot meet demand, as the gas load-shedding in both the domestic and industrial sectors, especially during the winter months, shows. Therefore, importing Iranian gas is a sensible economic decision; it is the geopolitics of the matter that have caused lengthy delays in the scheme's implementation. The fear of US sanctions should be dispensed with. For example, both China and India have been importing Russian oil, despite the West's displeasure with this trade in the context of the Ukraine war. The US has sanctioned hundreds of entities and individuals linked to Russia. This includes firms in China, Turkey and the UAE. And while it can be argued that China and India have the economic heft to ignore American and European sanctions, Pakistan, if it plays its cards right, can also trade with Iran without attracting Washington's ire. The state should go ahead with the pipeline, while the legal and diplomatic fronts need to be monitored to ensure that the project is protected from American sanctions. The new government must do what is in the country's best interests.

Smoke and mirrors?

Muna Khan

A line from a piece I quoted a few weeks ago has stayed with me: "Does social media cause this anger or does it reveal it?" This was from a 2022 interview Vox did with Lucy Allais, a philosopher at Johns Hopkins University. I've been paying more attention to exchanges in the real world and the virtual world to see if I can attempt to answer whether X held up a mirror to show us we are rude and angry, were we always like this?

I couldn't get anywhere because I was rudely disconnected from the platform I hoped would allow me to show you a glimpse of the aforementioned frustration. But I think we all kind of know that how we got here is the result of years of stoking anger, resentment, fear about 'the others' — for one side the others are corrupt, another blames the cult followers for all ills in Pakistan.

An explanation may be needed here, especially for an older generation unfamiliar with how algorithms select content that elicits anger and outrage as an audience engagement strategy. These platforms allow for people's inhibitions to be lowered online because the nature of the interaction offers anonymity, invisibility and no fear of consequences. Social media is an unforgiving place. Users are baying for blood and unable to imagine, let alone accept, that someone made a mistake in their 280-word tweet. You can get away with saying truly horrible things and at most, your account is suspended, only for you to create another one. Studies show how extreme emotions coupled with lack of accountability can lead to bullying, harassment and — this is scary — arguments that end in vio-

lence in-person confrontations. Max Fisher documented some incidents in his book Chaos Machine. He cites a study conducted in 2017 where researchers tried to understand why refugees in some towns in Germany experienced violence and others didn't. They found that where people used Facebook a lot in that area, violence was up. If there was a decrease or disruption in Facebook usage, violence was down. There's equally compelling, and terrible, stories of how people used WhatsApp to organise massacres of Muslims in Myanmar and the violence in the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021, has been linked to vlogs on YouTube promoting radical views. Social media platforms are, as the founder of Twitter Jack Dorsey told a Congressional hearing in the US, "ultimately [...] a business. And a business wants to grow the number of its customers". The way it does so is by keeping users online longer, in their echo chambers, hearing what they want to hear. However, they don't want to accept responsibility for what people do after they've been fed content on their platforms. This is where it gets tricky. Social media isn't shaping worldview but world events too, as Fisher writes in his book.

And Facebook — which also owns WhatsApp — doesn't really want to take responsibility for the mobs that went on an anti-Muslim rampage in Sri Lanka in 2018. Fisher writes how Facebook did not respond to the Sri Lankan government's calls to help them — broke the violence broke out — but did write to ask why their traffic had dropped after the government banned Facebook for a short period to quell the violence. Facebook did eventually

apologise for its role after conducting a probe into the events.

Unfortunately, not much has changed since. The answer is not to impose a ban, says Fisher. This must be especially disappointing to read for policymakers in Pakistan, whose favoured form of solution is to ban. I don't know when it has served them well but here we are, with no access to X and no let-up in the disinformation.

Fisher believes platforms could try turning off algorithms and "engagement-maximising features" — like the like button and the counter at the bottom which shows you how many people have liked it, shared it. Policymakers around the world have to work with these platforms to get them to remove the harmful aspects within their platforms because there is good in social media. I believe most governments don't want to risk alienating these platforms that can pack up and go elsewhere, taking their millions with them.

Right now, unfortunately, these platforms are showing us our worst sides. And it's playing out in the real world as we saw when women diners attacked — verbally and physically — PML-N's Hanif Abbasi at a restaurant in Islamabad. I fear once their identities are revealed and shared, their safety is at risk. I suspect they didn't think of the consequences because they were driven by moral outrage online, not rational thinking in real life. It is impossible to avoid harassment, misogyny, videos of violence and atrocities, conspiracy theories online. We have to move fast if we want to stop that from trending in our physical world. -- Courtesy Dawn

Gandhi and Jinnah

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

As relations between India and Pakistan remain frosty, a theatrical play in Washington has stirred conversations on peaceful coexistence, inter-faith harmony, and the need for a fresh look at the history of the two countries. The play Gandhi and Jinnah return home, discussed at the Karachi Literature Festival last week, describes how far the two countries have drifted from the vision of their respective founding fathers, Gandhi, the Mahatma, and Jinnah, the Quaid-e-Azam, who both hailed from Gujarat and played central roles in the struggle for independence.

Gandhi had envisioned that India would be a united, secular and pluralistic country once the British left. Fondly called Babu, he built his freedom struggle on the principle of non-violence, famously remarking that an eye for an eye would make the whole world blind.

Jinnah, too, was a strong proponent of peace, harmony and pluralism, as clearly stipulated in his speech of Aug 11, 1947. He also was not opposed to the unity of India per se, as he had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946. However, Jinnah was concerned that the legacy of parliamentary democracy the British were leaving behind would keep the Muslim minority perpetually subservient to the rule of the Hindu majority. He did not wish to see British Raj replaced by Ram Raj. Jinnah's efforts to create Pakistan were essentially aimed at enabling the Muslims of India to protect their political, economic, and cultural rights.

Seventy-six years later, if Gandhi and Jinnah were to, fictionally, return home in 2024,

they would find their respective countries to be very different from the ones they had envisioned. Gandhi would find India on course to becoming a Hindu nationalist state, with shrinking space for minorities, growing communal violence, mosques being replaced with mandirs, and the Ayodhya syndrome in full swing to make India a Hindu rashtra. He would be particularly dejected to find that his own state Gujarat had seen the worst kind of violence against Muslims in 2002.

For his part, if Jinnah were to return home in 2024, he would find his country mired in corruption, religious extremism, lawlessness, unemployment and poverty. He would be grieved to see a country blessed with such fertile land, minerals, mountains, and splendid coastline ranking depressingly low in social and economic indicators.

The play, conceived by Akbar S. Ahmad, the Iqbal Chair at the American University, Washington, and directed by Manjula Kumar of Global Performing Arts, sends out a powerful message that in the interest of peace, both countries must return to the vision of their founding fathers.

Another, perhaps more important, message that Akbar S. Ahmad sends through this play is that the prevailing hostility between India and Pakistan does not serve either country well. The past cannot be changed. There is a need to look at each other afresh as friends and neighbours.

Jinnah had envisioned India and Pakistan living in peaceful coexistence, much like the US and Canada. He even maintained his residence in Mumbai. Gandhi was opposed to partition. Yet, when it happened, he used all his

influence on the Indian government to ensure that Pakistan got its share of financial and other dues, signalling his advice for a peaceful coexistence.

For the past seven decades, mutual mistrust has bedevilled relations between India and Pakistan. Since 2016, the two have suspended all bilateral contacts. Such a hostile environment deepens misunderstanding between the two countries. Dialogue is not a favour by one to the other, but an essential means with which to address each other's concerns. For Pakistan, a resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people is a high priority. For India, the issue of cross-border terrorism is important, which incidentally has also assumed urgency for Pakistan, given the evidence that recently emerged that India had sent assassins to Pakistan to kill so-called anti-India elements, much like what it did lately in Canada and the US. India and Pakistan must, therefore, engage to address these and other issues in order to pave the ground for creating a good-neighbourly relationship. It is clear that there is a gloomy future for South Asia if India and Pakistan live in perpetual hostility. The play Gandhi and Jinnah return home was a creative way to drive home the message that during these times of hostility, it is worth restudying the lives and works of Jinnah and Gandhi and appreciate how their goals were ultimately common in the desire to see prosperity for their peoples in a post-colonial South Asia. And that they never envisioned nor desired such a hostile relationship that has set back both countries. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

KTH chief says:

Pak exports have great potential in Kyrgyzstan

LAHORE (APP): Kyrgyzstan Trade House (KTH) Chairman Meher Kashif Younis said on Sunday that exporting pharmaceuticals, agricultural products, dry fruit and leather goods to Kyrgyzstan offers a promising opportunity for economic growth and international trade relations.

Talking to a delegation of exporters and importers led by Faran Shahid here, he said Pak exported pharmaceutical, agricultural, dry fruit and leather products of USD 15.95 million during the first ten months of 2023 which is not up to existing potential. Meher added that in 2023, Kyrgyzstan's

foreign trade turnover increased by 29.9 percent (USD 15.7 billion) compared to the previous year. Kyrgyz exports reached up to USD 3.3 billion, a 46.8 percent increase, compared to 2022, while the imports grew by 26 percent to USD 12.4 billion.

The KTH Chairman said that China was Kyrgyzstan's top trading partner in 2023, accounting for 34.7 percent of Kyrgyzstan's foreign trade but Pakistan's share is negligible. He mentioned that trade with the member states of Eurasian Economic Union accounted for 27.8 percent of the country's total trade volume. He said Kyrgyzstan, located in

Central Asia, is a country with a developing economy and a growing demand for various goods and commodities. Pharmaceuticals constitute a vital component of any nation's healthcare system, and Kyrgyzstan is no exception. Exporting pharmaceutical products to Kyrgyzstan can contribute to improving access to essential medications, enhancing healthcare infrastructure, and ultimately, fostering better public health outcomes. He said pharmaceutical companies can tap into Kyrgyzstan's healthcare market and establish long-term partnerships with local distributors and healthcare institutions.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General IEAA Zahid Rafiq, CEO Taber Developers & marketing Musawar Abbasi, Executive Member Usman Shaheen, and others pose for a group photo during the inauguration ceremony of the new office of Taber Developers and Marketing.

Tapas invites business community to participate in upcoming Chamber Expo-2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Tapas Adhikari of Nepal to Pakistan extended an invitation to the Sialkot business community on Sunday, urging them to participate in the upcoming Nepal Chamber Expo-2024 in March and the Investment Summit in April 2024.

During his visit to the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry and interaction with Abdul Gafour Malik, President of the Chamber, and other executive members, he said that the participation of

Sialkot entrepreneurs could pave the way for bilateral business promotion, investment, and technology transfer.

"The Government of Nepal is ready to extend all kinds of support to foreign direct investment," he added.

"Sialkot could be a role model for Nepali people that it has emerged from a small town to a global business hub because of the hard work, innovation, and entrepreneurship of its people," he added.

He said Nepal and

Pakistan needed more economic engagements and as Ambassador of Nepal, "I want to tap the business opportunity in Pakistan that could be beneficial to both countries." During the interaction, he highly appreciated the contribution of Sialkot entrepreneurs making Sialkot a hub of sports goods, surgical items, and kitchen cutlery products in Pakistan.

He informed that recently Nepal has been able to export 6 containers of Nepali tea to the Pakistani market after decades.

Effective policy needed to promote demand-driven technical education: Saigol

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Fahimur Rahman Saigol has said that educated and skilled people can play a better role in national and economic development, calling for formulating an effective policy for the promotion of demand-driven technical education, as the present setup of technical training is not addressing the requirements of modern industrialization.

He stated this while addressing the audience as special guest at the annual meeting of Defense Welfare Society.

Fahimur Rahman Saigol appreciated the



HYDERABAD: A vendor displaying the rose flowers to attract the customers in connection with shab-e-barat at flowers market.

work and passion of the organizers of Defense Welfare Society who are providing technical education to students in this era of inflation, which is valuable and praiseworthy.

He observed that promotion of technical education is vital and much-needed for economic growth. He said that the collaboration between industry and academia will ultimately bridge the skill gap, leading to a quantum jump in the country's exports.

The PIAF Chairman said that the young generation should pay full attention to their studies because they have to take care of the country's future.



LAHORE: Women purchasing artificial jewelry from the stall during the Lahore Literary Festival at AlHamra.

PFC board for industry status to furniture sector

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council's Board of Directors (PFC-BoD) has demanded the government to grant furniture sector the status of an industry in order to increase country's overall exports. Chairing the board meeting here Sunday, PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq said the furniture sector in Pakistan was a vital component of its economy, employing millions and showcasing the craftsmanship and skill of its people. However, it had long been overlooked

and undervalued, he said, adding that granting industry status to the furniture sector was crucial for several reasons as it provide access to various incentives, subsidies, and support mechanisms tailored for industrial sectors, thus fostering growth and innovation within the furniture industry. He said, it would enhance the sector's credibility and attract much-needed investment, both domestic and foreign, leading to modernization and expansion.

Economy another victim of war in impoverished Sudan

PORT SUDAN, Sudan (AFP/APP): Before the Sudanese army and paramilitary fighters turned their guns on each other last year, Ahmed used to sell one of Sudan's main exports: gum arabic, a vital ingredient for global industry. Now he's out of business, and his story encapsulates the broader economic collapse of Sudan during 10 months of war.

Since combat between two rival generals began on April 15, Ahmed has been at the fighters' mercy.

"When the war began, I had a stock of gum arabic in a warehouse south of Khartoum that was intended for export," Ahmed told AFP, asking to use only his first name for fear of retaliation.

"To get it out I had to pay huge sums to the Rapid Support Forces," the paramilitaries commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo who are at war with the Sudanese Armed Forces led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

Businessmen pin great hopes from new government

FAISALABAD (APP): As consultations for new government culminate with political bigwigs agreeing to a coalition government, the business community and other strata of life are pinning great hopes from the new set up for economic revival, reduction in cost of living, energy prices and inflation and creating job opportunities.

Recent political instability coupled with economic recession had severely choked business activities with discontinuation of economic policies, depreciation of Pakistani Rupee versus US dollar and high production cost further aggravating the

situation.

But, the experts and business community still expect better days ahead if the new government resolves for e-governance and IT based mechanism, eradication of corruption and nepotism and sustainable economic policies.

"Political uncertainty played havoc with national economy. The rumors spread by myopic elements shattered the confidence of investors as witnessed from rise and fall of stock market," remarked Acting President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Dr Sajjad Arshad.

"Pakistan's dollar bonds shed heavily as in wake of rumors that People's Party and Muslim League-Nawaz had failed to finalize the future government," he said. "But, as soon as these parties reached an agreement, a visible increase was recorded in Pak dollar bonds, clearly indicating the importance of political stability in the country."

He regretted that during the transitional phase of government formation, some elements started treading the political leadership to appease their foreign masters.

"In such a scenario, consistent economic

policies can be a strong reply to these elements and for setting businesses on strong footing to steer country out of present crisis," Sajjad Arshad said. "Our money market remained highly volatile due to depleting reserves and we can boost our trade and reserves by bringing in investment and sorting out dollars shortage."

"Cost of production is another element pegging our exports. Our industry pays higher energy cost as compared to regional competitors that makes our exportable surplus costlier in international markets," he added.

He informed that electricity consumption in

FESCO region recorded a massive decline due to reduced economic and industrial activities. "Most of SMEs cannot afford high cost of electricity and have reduced their operation. Poor law and order is another challenge for healthy economic activities."

Gauging the gravity of situation, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz floated the idea of Charter of Economy that was initially rejected by its political opponents. But, now as almost all political forces have realized the challenge, it is hoped that they would join hands to ensure continuity of policies for a stable economy.

Naqvi opens new museum in Badshahi masjid, upgradation project of Mazaar-e-Iqbal

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, along with provincial ministers, visited the historic Badshahi Mosque and the Mazaar-e-Iqbal here on Sunday. The CM inaugurated the new museum for placing the holy relics in the Badshahi Mosque and the upgradation project of the Mazaar-e-Iqbal. Mohsin Naqvi also inaugurated the Lahore Fort Cafe being built at the exterior wall of the Lahore Fort and appreciated high quality of the new museum being built for placing the holy relics. He inspected the new and beautiful showcase for placing the holy relics. The CM ordered early completion of the

transfer work of the holy relics in the new museum. Mohsin Naqvi maintained that safely keeping the holy relics attributed to the great personalities at an appropriate place is our foremost responsibility. The holy relics would be kept separately and safely in an excellent manner in the new museum. The installation work of new tiles, marbles in the exterior corridor of Mazaar-e-Iqbal and renovation work of its interior part has been completed. He inspected the construction, rehabilitation and upgradation work of the Mazaar-e-Iqbal. Mohsin Naqvi along with the provincial ministers paid a visit to the Mazaar-e-Iqbal and prayed for the prosperity, stability and

integrity of Pakistan. He directed to prepare SOPs for using the back door to pay a visit to the Mazaar-e-Iqbal. Mohsin Naqvi remarked that the tourists would feel entertained with the establishment of the Lahore Fort Cafe at the exterior wall of the Lahore Fort. Provincial ministers Dr. Javed Akram, Mansoor Qadir, Amir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, Adviser Wahab Riaz, Chief Secretary, Senior Member Board of Revenue, Chairman Planning & Development Board, Khateeb Badshahi Mosque Abdul Khabeer Azad, IG Police, DG WCLA Kamran Lashari, Secretary Auqaf, Commissioner Lahore, CCPO, Deputy Commissioner and officials concerned were present.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi in a meeting with Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman.

Governor praises CM Naqvi, cabinet for completion of public welfare projects in record time

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a farewell call on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. On this occasion, the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab briefed the Governor Punjab about the performance of the Caretaker setup for 13 months in detail.

The Punjab Chief Minister also presented a report on the performance of the caretaker government. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman praised Mohsin Naqvi and the cabinet for the completion of public welfare projects in record time. He added that under the leadership of the caretaker chief minister Punjab, the caretaker

cabinet has set a good example of public service, transparency and governance. He said that continuity of policies is very important for the development of the country. Governor Punjab expressed the hope that the newly elected government will take forward the policies and projects of public welfare and bring development and stability in the country.

Will not make verbal claims, to prove eligibility via good governance: Gandapur

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) chief minister office, Ali Amin Gandapur has said that he was not in favour of making verbal claims and pledges but will prove his eligibility through good governance. Interacting with a private news channel on Sunday, he said that uplifting the country's economy was among the top priorities of PTI and it would present pro-people budget. Ali Amin Gandapur said that he would spare no efforts to provide maximum relief to

the people of province, ensuring law and order, restoration of health cards and to improve the education system of KP. He said the PTI founder picked a team that won the world cup [in 1992] and he would adopt same passion to elect the provincial cabinet. The PTI's candidate for KPC's slot said that 55 percent of the newly-elected members of his party were those who won for the first time. The recent elections have exposed the turncoats and separated them from those who were loyal to the party, he added.



LAHORE: People selecting and purchasing old books from a roadside setup at Mall Road.

Educating new generation about importance of clean, green environment stressed

MULTAN (APP): Secretary School Education of South Punjab, Dr. Obaidullah Khokhar, said that it was the need of the hour to educate the new generation about the importance of a clean and green environment and its related issues to deal with the dangers of climate change. The aim of introducing Green Book as a curriculum in government schools by the Education Department of South Punjab was to prepare students for the changing climate. He expressed these views while talking to senior civil servants, former Secretary of School

Education, South Punjab, Ghulam Farid, and a climate change consultant associated with an international organization, Ghazanfar Ali, regarding steps to deal with the threats of environmental and climate change. On the occasion, Additional Secretary Khawaja Mazharul Haq Siddiqui, Deputy Secretary Saif-ur-Rehman Khan Balwani, and related officials were present in the meeting. Dr. Obaidullah Khokhar said that Pakistan was on the fifth list among the countries most affected by the effects of climate change.



BAHAWALPUR: Rangers Cholistan Camel band presenting their skills at a ceremony held in connection with 19th TDCP Cholistan Desert Rally 2024 at Cholistan desert Jeep Rally.

Efforts to be made to overcome inflation, poverty: Azma Bukhari

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz leader Azma Bukhari has said that an all-out effort will be made to overcome inflation and poverty in Punjab. Taking to media outside the Punjab Assembly on Sunday she hoped that the opposition would accept the PML-N's mandate and added that her party wanted to

take along the opposition. She said, "The PML-N does not believe in politics of revenge." Azma Bukhari said that the leader of the house in the Punjab Assembly would be elected through division of the house procedure. She said that in 2018, the PML-N had accepted the then PTI government despite all reservations.

Women among nine injured in truck-bus collision

FAISALABAD (INP): At least nine people including women were injured when an over speeding truck rammed into a passenger bus here on Sunday, rescue sources said.

According to details, due to bursting of tyre, a truck hit a passenger bus in Mushtaq Chowk of Tandlianwala in district Faisalabad. Due to collision, the bus went off road and overturned resultantly nine people including 35-year-old Mohsin s/o Asghar Ali, 24-year-old Aqsa w/o Hafiz Amjad, 60-year-old Shehbaz s/o Muhammad Boota, 50-year-old Zahida Bibi w/o Noor Ahmed, 28-year-old Hafiz Amjad s/o Muhammad Aslam, 45-year-old Irshad Bibi w/o Abdul Razzad, 31-year-old Irfan s/o Abdul Rasheed, 30-year-old Parveen d/o Ahmed Umer and 32-year-old Nazeer Ahmed s/o Muhammad Sharif were injured. The injured were shifted to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital Tandlianwala for treatment.

New population policy draft complete: Salman

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Population Welfare Department Secretary Salman Ejaz has announced the completion of a draft for a new population policy, soon to be presented for cabinet approval. Presiding over a meeting here on Sunday, he highlighted the policy's transformative approach to family planning services and counselling, aiming to bring these vital services directly to the public. Through communication channels, the initiative seeks to raise awareness about family planning and its benefits. The planning welfare secretary stressed that the prospective Population Policy 2024-29 envisions a society characterized by

prosperity, health, and education. Recognizing fundamental rights to reproductive health, sufficient nutrition, and an elevated quality of life for all citizens, the policy targets a reduction in population growth rates, emphasizing coordination with stakeholders, including religious leaders and community engagement. The Population Welfare Department in Punjab, renowned for its reproductive health services, is dedicated to extending its accessible model beyond provincial borders. Leveraging transportation, awareness campaigns, and education, the department aims for comprehensive coverage.

SSC student shot dead by class fellow over petty issue

FAISALABAD (INP): A matriculation student was shot dead by class fellow over petty dispute in Chak No 7 GB on Sunday, police said. According to details, a group of class fellows had gathered in a private academy to prepare for annual SSC exam where two class fellows Abdullah Irshad s/o Irshad Ali and Ali Arman exchanged hot words. Other class fellows present on the scene settled the dispute between the two but Ali Arman considering it to be his insolence opened fire Abdullah Irshad while returning home.

International News

92 killed in Gaza as Israel, Hamas seek ceasefire deal

Monitoring Desk
GAZA STRIP: Dozens of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been killed in the latest Israeli strikes, the territory's health ministry said on Saturday, after Israel's spy chief joined talks in Paris seeking to unblock negotiations on a truce. The talks come after a plan for a post-war Gaza unveiled by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu drew criticism from key ally the United States, and was rejected by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The talks also come alongside deepening fears for Gaza's civilians desperate for food. The United Nations' main aid body for Palestinians, UNRWA, said Gazans were "in extreme peril while

the world watches". Hamas said on Saturday that Israeli forces had launched more than 70 strikes on civilian homes in Gaza cities, including Deir-al-Balah, Khan Yunis and Rafah over the previous 24 hours. The health ministry said at least 92 people were killed. Israel's military said it was "intensifying the operations" in western Khan Yunis using tanks, close-range fire and aircraft. "The soldiers raided the residence of a senior military intelligence operative" in the area and destroyed a tunnel shaft, a military statement said. Hamas, the Palestinian movement that has ruled Gaza since 2007, said fighting was raging in the northern Gaza district of Zeitun. In nearby Jabalia refugee

camp, tempers are rising and on Friday dozens of people held an impromptu protest. "We didn't die from air strikes but we are dying from hunger," said a sign held by one child. In the camp, bedraggled children waited expectantly, holding plastic containers and battered cooking pots for what little food is available. Residents have taken to eating scavenged scraps of rotten corn, animal fodder unfit for human consumption and even leaves. Gaza's health ministry said a two-month-old baby identified as Mahmud Fathu had died of "malnutrition". "The risk of famine is projected to increase as long as the government of Israel continues to impede the entry of aid into Gaza," as well as access to water.



Palestinians help an injured man at the site of a strike on a house in Rafah.

How Russia's military uses volunteer fighters to plug gaps in Ukraine

BALAKLIA (Internews): When Russian forces withdrew from the town of Balaklia in eastern Ukraine in late 2022, pursued by Ukrainian troops and under artillery fire, they left a poorly equipped group of volunteers to guard their retreat. The force of around 50 men came from the National Army Combat Reserve - known by its Russian acronym BARS - a loose assembly of units totaling several thousand fighters that Russia's defense ministry has deployed in Ukraine to supplement its regular forces. About four hours of footage from a bodycam

worn by one of the fighters, obtained by provides a rare first-hand view of the combat operations of a BARS unit, according to three military experts who reviewed the video to provide an assessment for the news agency of the unit's military capability. The invasion of Ukraine marked the first time BARS, which was founded in 2015, deployed units in combat. The video, coupled with interviews with four platoon members, shows the BARS unit was left to defend Balaklia with no heavy weaponry or air support, malfunctioning communications, and confused coordination with the regular military.

Jets intercept high-altitude balloon over US

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: A small balloon floating at a high altitude over the US state of Utah was intercepted by fighter aircraft on Friday but deemed to pose no national security or flight risk, a US-Canada military agency said, according to US media. The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) said in a statement it had detected the balloon traveling at an altitude between 43,000-45,000 feet (13,100-13,700 metres), CBS News reported. "The balloon was intercepted by NORAD fighters over Utah, who determined it was not maneuverable and did not present a threat to national security."

US, British forces carry out more strikes against Houthis in Yemen

WASHINGTON (Internews): U.S. and British forces carried out strikes against more than a dozen Houthi targets in Yemen on Saturday, officials said, the latest round of military action against the Iran-linked group that continues to attack shipping in the region. The United States has carried out near daily strikes against the Houthis, who control the most populous parts of Yemen and have said their attacks on shipping are in solidarity with Palestinians as Israel strikes Gaza. The strikes have so far failed to halt the Houthis' attacks, which have upset global trade and raised shipping rates. A joint statement from countries that either took part in the strikes or

provided support, said the military action was against 18 Houthi targets across eight locations in Yemen including underground weapons and missile storage facilities, air defense systems, radars and a helicopter. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the strikes were meant "to further disrupt and degrade the capabilities of the Iranian-backed Houthi militia." "We will continue to make clear to the Houthis that they will bear the consequences if they do not stop their illegal attacks, which harm Middle Eastern economies, cause environmental damage and disrupt the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen and other countries," Austin said.

Australia PM pledges 'whatever support' needed as wild fires destroy homes

SYDNEY (Internews): Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese pledged on Sunday to provide whatever support was needed to assist Victoria state in a days-long wildfire emergency that has razed homes after authorities warned extreme heat could fan the blazes this week. "We will provide whatever support is requested from Victoria," Albanese told reporters in the city of Frankston, Victoria, according to a transcript. "It's a reminder of the need for us to be vigilant for us to continue to work and act on the threat that is climate change." The emergency has killed livestock, destroyed six homes and forced more than 2,000 people to leave western towns and

head to the city of Ballarat, 95 km (60 miles) west of the state capital, Melbourne. Australia is in the grips of an El Nino weather pattern, which is typically associated with extreme phenomena such as wildfires, cyclones and droughts. More than 15 bushfires were burning in Victoria on Sunday, with the most serious blaze, ranked at the second highest danger rating, near several remote towns, according to the state's emergency authority. State authorities have said there are concerns about the weather this week particularly Wednesday into Thursday when extreme heat is forecast that could further fan the fires.



Republican presidential candidate and former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley speaks on stage at her watch party during the South Carolina Republican presidential primary election in Charleston, South Carolina.

15 killed in Chinese building blaze

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: At least 15 people have been killed and 44 injured in a fire at a residential building in eastern China's Nanjing, local authorities said on Saturday. The fire broke out early Friday morning, officials said at a press conference, with a preliminary investigation suggesting the blaze started on the building's first floor, where electric bikes had been

placed. The building is located in Yuhuatai district of Nanjing, a city of more than eight million that lies about 260 kilometres (162 miles) northwest of Shanghai. By 6am (2200 GMT Thursday), the fire had been extinguished, and a search and rescue operation ended around 2pm on Friday, the authorities said. Twenty-five fire trucks were mobilised to fight the blaze.

Murder of 5 women shakes Vienna

Monitoring Desk
VIENNA: Austrian authorities were on Saturday investigating the killings of five women in the capital Vienna within a single day, sowing panic in the city. The dead included three women found brutally stabbed to death in a brothel. The bodies of three young women were found with fatal knife wounds in a brothel in Vienna's underprivileged Brigittenau district on Friday night after a witness alerted police. A 27-year-old man still carrying a knife that was believed to be the murder weapon was arrested nearby on suspicion of committing the murders, police said on Saturday. No motive has been given for the killings with the suspect still being questioned, Austrian press agency APA reported. In a separate case, a mother and her 13-year-old daughter had been found dead in a Vienna apartment.

ANC kicks off poll season from key battleground

Monitoring Desk
DURBAN: South Africa's ruling ANC launched its election campaign on Saturday, hoping to overcome anger over high unemployment and a sluggish economy and to protect its three-decade-old majority. In power since the advent of democracy in 1994, President Cyril Ramaphosa's

African National Congress has suffered a sharp decline in support, beset by allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Yet the party remains a formidable machine, with supporters at all levels of government across most of the country, and many South Africans retain proud memories of its lead role in the anti-apartheid struggle.

Manipur college blast claims one life

Monitoring Desk
GUWAHATI: One person died and another was injured in a bomb blast at a college in Imphal, the capital of India's northeastern state of Manipur, on Friday night, security officials said. No group has taken responsibility for the blast of the improvised explosive device (IED), the officials said. The IED exploded in the campus of a college [DM College campus] in the city.

India 'fully stops' water flow to Pakistan with Shahpur Kandi barrage on Ravi river

ISLAMABAD (INP): The water flow of Ravi river has reportedly been stopped to Pakistan after the completion of Shahpur Kandi barrage which is situated on the borders of Indian Punjab and the state of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, as per Indian media reports.

India Today reported that previously allotted 1150 cusecs water of Pakistan, will now benefit the region of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The water will be benefiting 32,000 hectares of land in the Kathua and Samba districts.

Indian perusing the water terrorism agenda, now executing the latest project of Shahkandi barrage that would supposedly be used for 'irrigation and for hydro power generation' but at the cost of cutting the flow towards Pakistan.

Already India so far constructed many dams like Bhakra Dam on Sutlej, Pong and Pandoh Dam on the Beas and Thein (Ranjitsagar) on the Ravi.

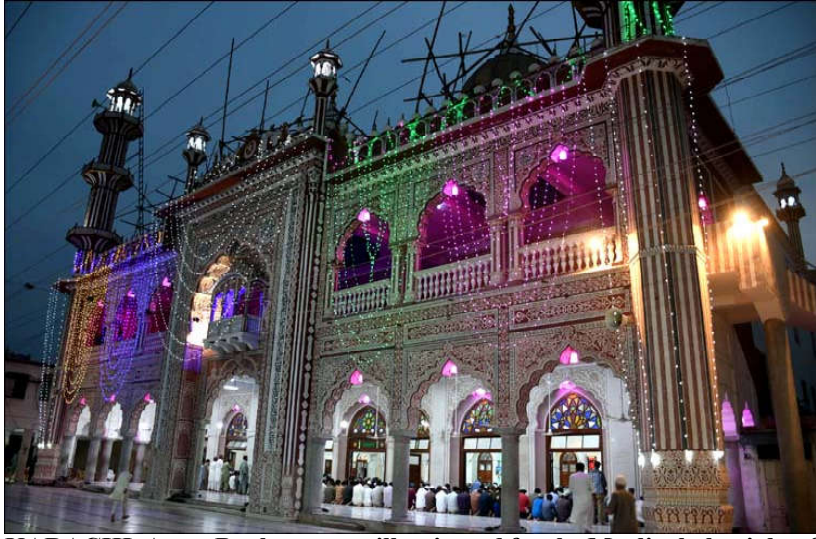
The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan, arranged by the World Bank, signed on September 19, 1960.

The treaty divides the rivers into two categories: Eastern Rivers (Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi) which are allocated to India, and Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) which are allocated to Pakistan.

Indian media reported Shahpur Kandi dam completion allows India to make maximum use of the River Ravi water previously flowing towards Pakistan from the Lakhapur dam. It is pertinent to note that former Indian Prime Minister Narsima Rao laid the foundation stone for the shahpur kandi in 1995 and remained disputed for almost over four and a half years.

Earlier, addressing the UN Security Council, Pakistan Permanent Representative in the United Nations Ambassador Munir Akram said Pakistan aims to reinvigorate the Indus River basin which provides food security to over 225 million people.

Pakistan has called for strict implementation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty to address the looming water crisis. He said that to this end, Pakistan has launched the multi-dimensional Living Indus projects.



KARACHI: Aram Bagh mosque, illuminated for the Muslim holy night of Lailat al-Barat, in Karachi

Tirmizi assures all possible assistance to injured Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Faisal Niaz Tirmizi on Sunday assured all possible assistance to fellow Pakistanis who were injured in a fire eruption incident at a sanitizers and perfumes related chemical products depot in Ajman.

The ambassador also expressed his best wishes and prayers for the early recovery of the injured. A sad accident of fire eruption occurred at a sanitizers and perfumes-related chemical products facility in Ajman, UAE late on February 24. A total of nine Pakistanis got injured in the ill-fated incident and were immediately rushed to different hospitals, the Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai said in a press release.

"We are ensuring all possible assistance to the injured Pakistanis. The Welfare Wing of Pakistan's Consulate General, Dubai visited the hospitals immediately after the unfortunate occurrence and is constantly in touch with the relevant authorities", the press release quoted Consul General Hussain Muhammad, as saying.

Four of these injured were initially taken to Khalifa bin Zayed Hospital, Ajman included Gul Dad s/o Shah Nawaz Dahri, Nawab s/o Shah Nawaz and Imam Bux s/o Khuda Bux Solangi all belonging to Shaheed Benazirabad District (Nawabshah), Sindh) and Akram s/o Dawood Khan a resident of District Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab.

PTI-supported nine members take oath in Sindh Assembly

KARACHI (INP): Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) PTI-supported nine members and a Jamaat-e-Islami member took oath in Sindh Assembly on Sunday.

Murad Ali Shah welcomed the members who take oath today and said, "We hope we all will play a role for betterment of the province". People's Party's candidate for Speaker's office, Ovais Qadir Shah also held a meeting with the PTI's independent members and welcomed them in the house. "Hopefully you will sit in a better environment in the house," he added. Sindh Assembly has been in session to elect the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the house today.

The People's Party has nominated Ovais Qadir Shah as its candidate for Speaker and Naveed Anthony as Deputy Speaker for Sindh.

PTI boycotts SA's Speaker election

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday announced to boycott the election of speaker and deputy speaker of Sindh Assembly.

As per details, the PTI-backed independent candidates jointly announced that they will neither support MQM-P candidate nor PPP nominated candidate for the speaker and the deputy speaker of Sindh Assembly.

Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) PTI-supported nine members and a Jamaat-e-Islami member took oath in Sindh Assembly earlier today (Sunday).

Murad Ali Shah welcomed the members who took oath today and said, "We hope we all will play a role in betterment of the province".

People's Party's candidate for Speaker's office, Ovais Qadir Shah also held a meeting with the PTI's independent members and welcomed them in the house.

"Hopefully you will sit in a better environment in the house," he added.

Hindutva regime pursuing policy to crush Muslim identity in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): The political injustice, fear and atrocities added to the miseries of the people in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir at the hands of Hindutva BJP.RSS regime and its men in uniform due to the unresolved Kashmir dispute.

An analytical report released by the Research Section of Kashmir Media Service, today, revealed that the atrocities, political injustice, mental disturbances and fear have increased manifold since the imposition of strict military and police siege by the Hindutva BJP.RSS regime and Indian military and police establishment and their dreaded agencies on August 5, 2019, when it revoked the special status of the territory.

The report said Indian troops have martyred 857 Kashmiris and injured 2413 during this period. It maintained that the Kashmiris had been pushed to the Stone Age due to an inhuman undemocratic regime and Indian military siege.

It further said that the brutalities perpetrated by Indian forces' personnel against the oppressed and defenceless people of Jammu and Kashmir have become a routine matter. It added that nocturnal house raids and cordon and search operations are conducted by the Indian troops, paramilitary and police personnel on a daily basis in IIOJK to suppress the Kashmiris' struggle for the right to self-determination.

The report deplored that properties, including residential houses and lands of the common people, are regularly snatched and attached by the dreaded Indian agencies on fake and false narratives during violent cordon and search operations in the occupied territory. The report said India is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for independent journalists where harassment of media persons, who not toting the line of the Narendra Modi-led Hindutva BJP government, has become the order of the day.



ISLAMABAD: Activists from Tribal District Bajaur protest against the killing of a young political leader



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah addressing during a ceremony at Pakistan Sweet Home.

National polio vaccination drive set to reach over 45.8 mln children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Reaffirming Pakistan's resolve to protect all children from the disability-causing polio virus, the Health Ministry the second nationwide polio vaccination campaign of the year on Sunday.

More than 45.8 million children under five years of age will be vaccinated during this second campaign of 2024, which will be held across the country from February 26 to March 3 and in 33 districts of KP from March 2 to March 6.

Children will also be given vitamin A supplements to boost their immunity.

"Polio is a terrible disease that has no cure and can leave children paralyzed for life. Unfortunately, it continues to be a threat to our children as some people refuse to vaccinate children based on misconceptions and false information about the vaccine," the Federal Secretary for Health, Iftekhar Ali Shallwani, said after administering polio drops to children.

Shallwani added that while the government remains strongly committed to ending polio in Pakistan and is making great progress, as decision-makers, parents and caregivers also have a huge responsibility to ensure their children's well-being.

In a special message directed to parents and caregivers, the health secretary emphasized, "Polio vaccinators will be delivering this vital vaccine to your doorsteps next week. I implore you to recognize the threat posed by the poliovirus to your children and ensure that you open your doors to facilitate their vaccination." This is the second consecutive nationwide campaign of the year after poliovirus was detected in sewage samples from 19 districts in January and in 126 sewage samples in 2023.

Bilawal felicitates office bearers of Bar Associations

KARACHI (APP): Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended heartfelt congratulations to the recently elected office-bearers of different High Court Bar Associations of the country.

He applauded the commitment and dedication demonstrated by the legal fraternity in choosing capable leaders who will undoubtedly contribute to the advancement of justice and the rule of law.

He extended greetings to newly elected office bearers of bar associations, including Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA), Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA), High Court Bar Association Hyderabad (HCBHA), and Multan High Court Bar Association (MHCBA). He extended his best wishes to the newly elected President of IHCBA, Riayat Ali Azad, President of LHCBA, Asad Manzoor Butt, Ayaz Tunio of HCBHA and Advocate Sajjad Haider Metla of MHBA, among others.

He further said that the bar associations play a pivotal role in upholding the supremacy of the constitution and the principles of justice.



ISLAMABAD: Nominated candidate for chairman PTI Barrister Gohar Ali Khan presenting his documents for Intra Party Elections.

Election winners Shazia, Nafisa Shah relinquish reserved Assembly seats

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ms Shazia Marri and Nafisa Shah tendered their resignations from the reserved seats in the National Assembly from Sindh province after grabbing a berth in the assembly in the general elections. Syeda Nafisa Shah won in the NA-202 Khairpur constituency by defeating former Sindh Chief Minister Syed Ghous Ali Shah, while Shazia Marri won in NA-209 Sanghar by defeating Muhammad Khan Junejo of the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA).

According to the notification from the Election Commission, Sharmila Sahiba Faruqi Hashaam and Muddassir Sehar Kamran, both members of the People's Party, have been declared elected on the reserved seats held by Shazia Marri and Syeda Nafisa Shah to the National Assembly. Meanwhile, the Election Commission issued a notification announcing the independent candidate Khizer Hussain Mazari's success in securing the Punjab Assembly seat PP 297.

Favourites named in PTI list of reserved seats for women in KP: sources

PESHAWAR (INP): Favourites have been added to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's list of reserved seats by showing them as long-time workers, sources within the party said on Monday. They claimed that the party has finalised the list and former members of provincial assemblies have been preferred.

The decision comes three days before the newly elected representatives in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would take oath as MPAs on February 28.

The PTI backed independent candidates emerged victorious by securing 91 seats out of the total 112 seats where the election was held on February 8.

Sources stated that lawyer Mashaal Yousafzai and her two friends were added to the list and the party was planning to also include Fozia Bibi from Chitral. Moreover, family members of two party workers who died in party activities were also named in it. They added that no women from the Peshawar district were named on the list as the disgruntled women supporters decided to protest outside the house of the speaker. Senator Falak Naz's friend Zahida Zahoor was also added to the list, they said and added that two names were added on the insistence of the party's candidate for the KP chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

Sharmila, Sehar becomes MNAs on PPP reserved seats

KARACHI (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a notification of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) nominated female leaders on reserved seats Sharmila Farooqi and Sahar Kamran. Both now became elected members of the National Assembly on the reserved seat from PPP. PPP Shazia Marri and Nafisa Shah resigned from the reserved seat after winning the general elections. The notification of the successful independent candidate Khizer Hussain Mazari from the Punjab Assembly seat PP 297 has also been issued.

SIC wants to bury past; move ahead: Amir Dogar

LAHORE (INP): Sunni Ittehad Council leader Amir Dogar said on Sunday that despite the fact that the PTI-backed candidates had to face a lot of repression and even the party's candidate for the slot of Punjab CM was not even allowed to attend the provincial assembly's session, still the party wanted to bury the past and move ahead for the progress and prosperity of the country.

Estate Office allots 1,227 govt accommodations in two years

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Estate Office, Ministry of Housing and Works has allotted as many as 1,227 quarters of Cat-IV, government accommodations to the federal government employees during the last two years.

"The Estate Office has made all the allotments on merit by keeping view of the seniority of the government employees who are working in different ministries and divisions," an official in the Ministry told APP.

He said that the Ministry of Housing and Works also intends to modify government accommodation allocation rules to facilitate federal government employees.

The official said a proposed amendment to modify the Allocation Rules, 2002 is under consideration which will be implemented as soon as possible.

He said the ministry plans to eliminate Rule 20 of Government House Allotment. This rule currently allows a government house allocated to a retired federal employee to be assigned to their employed son or daughter.

USC unveils generous price cuts during Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a commendable move to assist its valued customers during the upcoming month of Ramadan, the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) has taken a stride towards affordability.

The reduction in prices encompassed a variety of essential items, including ghee, cooking oil, tea, and other everyday necessities, the spokesman said on Sunday.

He said that the prices of various branded ghee and cooking oils have witnessed a notable decrease, ranging from Rs 4 to a substantial Rs 100 per kilogram. Similarly, branded tea, a staple in many households, is now available at a reduced cost, with a significant Rs 100 off on the 800-gram packs.

Noteworthy among the price adjustments is Dalda Cooking Oil, which can now be purchased at a discounted rate of Rs 508, down from the previous Rs 523. Other branded ghee and cooking oils are also being offered at highly competitive prices compared to the general market rates, he added.

The relief doesn't stop at kitchen essentials, beyond ghee, cooking oil, and tea, prices of other daily-use items have been slashed, making them considerably more affordable than prevailing market rates, he added.

He further emphasized that as part of its ongoing commitment to customer welfare, the Utility Stores Corporation is set to launch a Ramadan relief package next month. This initiative is expected to bring about further reductions in prices, ensuring that customers can celebrate the holy month without bearing the burden of inflated costs.

The Utility Stores Corporation has a track record of being proactive in providing relief to its esteemed customers. This latest endeavour aligns with its mission to make essential commodities more accessible, particularly during times when communities come together to observe religious and cultural traditions.



KARACHI: Senior leader of PPP Syed Khurshid Shah greets Syed Owais Qadir Shah on assuming charge of Speaker Sindh Assembly

PML-N Ulema accuse PTI of attempting to undermine national economy

LAHORE (APP): PML-N Ulema and Mashaikh Wing Punjab General Secretary Sahibzada Hafiz Muhammad Amjad lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder for allegedly sabotaging the nation's economic stability by corresponding with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Addressing an Ulema Convention on Sunday, Amjad asserted that the PTI's purported agenda is to dismantle the national economy, citing the recent letter to the IMF as evidence. He criticized the PTI for burdening the country with loans and then shifting the responsibility of repayment onto future generations. Highlighting the PML-N's track record, Amjad claimed that his party has historically navigated the nation out of crises towards progress. He emphasized the role of Ulema and Mashaikh in safeguarding Pakistan's ideological boundaries and promoting social consciousness.

Amjad called upon Ulema and Mashaikh to utilize their platforms to cultivate awareness among the populace, advocating for the establishment of an Islamic, prosperous society.

Govt support vital for growth of Pakistani film Industry: Shah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Sports, Culture, and Youth Affairs Sindh Dr. Syed Junaid Ali Shah on Sunday emphasized the importance of government support in unlocking the potential of the Pakistani film industry.

Speaking to a private news channel during the screening of the movie 'Texali Gate' in Karachi, Dr. Shah emphasized the need for significant improvement in the Pakistani film industry. He highlighted the challenges faced by the film industry in the era of commercialization. He proposed that the government should either provide subsidies or support cinema houses to make movie tickets more affordable for the general public. Dr. Shah underscored the untapped potential within the film industry, emphasizing that with government attention and patronage, the industry could flourish. Ayesha Umar, the producer and leading actress of the film, expressed optimism about the success of 'Texali Gate,' describing it as a portrayal of the harsh realities.



ISLAMABAD: A welder finishing grills of a new pedestrian bridge over the Srinagar Highway in the Federal Capital.

One stop facility center set up for incoming members of Parliament

ISLAMABAD (INP): With aim to facilitate and acquaint the newly elected members of the 16th National Assembly of Pakistan, a dedicated facility center has been established within the hallowed halls of the Parliament House in Islamabad. The arrival of these elected officials has commenced, marking the beginning of their journey in the legislative arena.

Under the guidance of Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Sharaf, welcoming banners adorn the precincts of Parliament, extending warm greetings to the incoming legislators. To streamline the induction process, a comprehensive one-window facility center has been instituted in Committee Room Number Two of the Parliament House. Here, members are undergoing essential formalities, including obtaining their assembly cards and familiarizing themselves with the protocols of the National Assembly through provided booklets.

Among the privileges extended to the newly inducted members is the issuance of blue passports for themselves, their spouses, parents, and unmarried children under 28 years of age. This passport grants visa-free travel to 46 countries worldwide, albeit necessitating a sworn oath.