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Country's future links with well educated youth: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that the country's future hinged upon well educated and skilled youth of the country and for the provision of quality education, the federal government would facilitate the high achievers with scholarship schemes to get education in the well reputed global educational institutes.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Ikramullah, a student from Balochistan province, who is now studying in the 9th class at Lawrence College Murree.

Under the prime minister's direction, the student from 2022 flood affected area of Qila Saifullah was provided with a facility to get edu-

cation at the country's prominent educational institute.

The prime minister recalled that he met the desperate student in the Khasnoob camp in Qila Saifullah when floods had caused destruction in Balochistan province during 2022.

He said that he had assured the student of the provision of quality education, adding that it pleased him a lot that the student was now studying in Lawrence College.

The student thanked the prime minister for giving him an opportunity to meet him.

Congratulating the prime minister, he said that he prayed for Shehbaz Sharif for his kind gesture.



ISLAMABAD: Mr Ikramullah, hailing from Qila Saifullah Balochistan, who is currently 9th class student at Lawrence College, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Mr Ikramullah's house and school were damaged in 2022 floods. On instructions of the Prime Minister, he was facilitated to continue education



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir senior serving military and civil officers, relatives of Shuhada and locals of the area attending funeral prayers of Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed and Captain Muhammad Ahmed Badar Shaheed who embraced martyrdom while defending their motherland against the scourge of terrorism in Mir Ali, North Waziristan District.

President warns of befitting response against terrorists

Attends funeral prayers of Lt Col Kashif, Capt Bader; Underscores unity against scourge of terrorism, Says I promise that the blood of our sons will not go in vain

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari, attended Namaz e Janaza of Shaheed Lt. Colonel Syed Kashif Ali and Captain Muhammad Ahmed Bader who had been martyred in Mir Ali, North Waziristan during a terrorist attack on Saturday.

On the occasion, the president paid tribute to shuhada and reiterated the resolve to respond to terrorist activities with full force, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release, on Sunday.

He said that the people of Pakistan and its armed forces were united and would face terrorism in unison.

He also expressed the resolve to make the terrorists accountable for blood of each martyred jawan, adding their brave brothers, sons and friends had been protecting the borders.

President Zardari promised that the blood of the sons of the soil would not go in vain.

In the early hours of 16 March, a group of six terrorists attacked a security forces' post in the general area of Mir Ali of North Waziristan District.

According to the details, the troops foiled the initial attempt of the attack, the terrorists rammed an explo-

sive-laden vehicle into the post, followed by multiple suicide bombing attacks, which led to the collapse of a portion of a building, resulting in the Shahadat of five soldiers.

APP add: The funeral prayers of Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed, age 39 years and resident of Karachi and Captain Muhammad Ahmed Badar Shaheed, age 23 years and resident of District Talagang who embraced martyrdom while defending their motherland against the scourge of terrorism in Mir Ali, North Waziristan District, were offered at Chaklala Garrison Rawalpindi.

President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, Foreign Minister, Interior Minister, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of Army Staff, senior serving military and civil officers, relatives of Shuhada and locals of the area attended the funeral, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said on Sunday. "Pakistan Army has consistently upheld the ideals of Faith, Unity and Discipline. Guided by these enduring principles, Pakistan Army has always endeavoured to set higher benchmarks of professionalism and loyalty in its unrelenting fight against terrorism.

Afghanistan's soil being used for terrorism in Pakistan: Asif

SIALKOT (INP): Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif says entire nation is united against terrorists and security forces are rendering unprecedented sacrifices for peace and stability in the country.

Talking to media in Sialkot on Sunday, he said martyrs are our real heroes who sacrificed their lives to safeguard the motherland.

The Defence Minister strongly condemned cowardly attack by terrorists in Mir Ali area of North Waziristan district.

He also condemned social media campaign by some elements against martyrs and said there is a need for unity in the war against terrorism.

Answering the question, he said Pakistan is passing through an economic crisis and one political party has written a letter to the International Monetary Fund, which is regrettable.

The Minister said that

the government is determined to steer the country out of economic crisis and put it on the path of progress and development.

To a question, he regretted that Afghanistan's soil is being used for terrorism in Pakistan.

He said that some facilitators have been traced, and Pakistan has raised the issue with Afghanistan government.

He said those people who do not have valid documents would not be allowed to live in Pakistan.

APP adds: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has condemned the terrorist incident in Mir Ali and paid tribute to the martyrs.

Addressing a press conference at his residence at Sialkot Cantonment, Khawaja Muhammad Asif said that unity is necessary to fight the war against terrorism and those who sacrifice against terrorism are our benefactors.



SIALKOT: Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif is addressing to the media at his residence.

Governor calls for preparing comprehensive strategy to prevent mishaps & disasters

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has underlined the need to prepare comprehensive strategy for prevention of the mishaps and disasters well in time in the present developed era of science and technology.

The Governor said that forests and wildlife are our national assets, therefore, it is necessary to create sense of their protection besides their importance.

In this regard, the employees of all concerned departments and volunteers deserve appreciation for overcoming the fire broke out in the forests located in mountains of Barkhan district.

Malik Abdul Wali Kakar said that the long term planning is direly needed to extinguish the fire

as well as to cope with the natural disasters including earthquakes, floods or epidemics.

The Governor said that one can not neglect the incident of fire eruption in the forests merely by terming the same as natural calamity or mere fire eruption.

Rather, advance information of such mishaps and disasters can be given in the developed era of science and technology, and then it is possible to prevent the otherwise likely financial and human losses, he added.

Moreover, the sustainable arrangements can also be made for protection from incidents like fire in forests and etc, he said.

In addition to this, assistance of the media can also be sought for running awareness campaign among general public.

CM appreciates PDMA, FC, Forests, District administration and levies for overcoming Barkhan mountains fire

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has appreciated the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Frontier Corps (FC), district administration and levies force for extinguishing the fire erupted in the forests at mountains located in Barkhan district.

In an official statement issued here on Sunday, the

Chief Minister said that all the concerned overcome the fire through joint efforts, which is appreciable.

He said that we appreciate all employees and jawans who took part in the process of extinguishing fire in Barkhan mountains. However, he directed the concerned authorities to standby the concerned operational teams in the district headquarter in view of the winds and dry wild grass.

Corruption was rampant in former PTI govt in KP, admits Marwat

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader and lawmaker Sher Afzal Marwat, who is known for his outspoken demeanour and controversial statements, on Sunday admitted that corruption was rampant in his party's previous government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

During a live session on X Spaces, he alleged: "In the previous government of the PTI, people became not billionaires but trillionaires [via corruption]."

Responding to a question, the PTI leader said that the narrative of keeping former prime minister Imran Khan at Adiala Jail instead of his residence in Bani Gala was not floated by him. "Former KP chief minister Mahmood Khan earns Rs2.5 million daily from one of his mines now," he added.

Elements behind campaign against martyrs to face stern action: Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Sunday the government was fully aware of the challenges facing the country and steps were required to tackle economic problems.

Addressing a press conference here at the PML-N Secretariat, he said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had shared his agenda aimed at stabilizing the country's economy.

He said the Premier had taken up all matters

seriously, including reducing government expenses, privatisation of certain state-owned entities. "Restructuring of the Federal Board of Revenue and tax reforms are major initiatives the government is undertaking to increase the tax net.

All these measures are being taken to reduce the burden on poor people and to bring elites in the tax net," he maintained.

He said that international economic journals like Bloomberg had termed the appointment of the Fi-

nance Minister a good step, adding that international journals had acknowledged that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had a potential to overcome economic challenges through reforms.

He said: "Political stability leads to economic stability and sincere efforts are being made in this regard."

He strongly condemned the terrorist attack in the Mir Ali area of North Waziristan, in which seven soldiers, including two officers, were martyred.

Barkhan wildfire extinguished

QUETTA (APP): Local administration, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and local residents extinguished the wildfire that engulfed the Koh-e-Jandaran in Barkhan district of Balochistan the other day.

Hundreds of trees and precious shrubs have burnt in forest fire at Koh-e-Jandaran on the confluence of Kohlu and Barkhan in Balochistan. A huge forest fire that erupted in the mountainous region on Saturday spread over large area and engulfed the entire areas putting hazards to the hundreds of trees and precious and rare shrubs.



RAWALPINDI: President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari and Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir pays condolence to martyrs family after funeral prayers of Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed and Captain Muhammad Ahmed Badar

Preliminary list of candidates issued by ECP: 38 candidates in competition run for 11 seats of Senate from Balochistan

Independent Report

QUETTA: In all 38 candidates are in competition run for 11 seats of Senate from Balochistan province as the preliminary list of candidate was issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) here on Sunday.

According to the preliminary list, in all 17 candidates filed nomination papers for 7 general seats of Senate from the province while 13 candidates filed nominations for two seats allocated for Technocrats from the province.

Similarly, eight nomination papers were filed by the women for two seats of women in Senate from the province.

The process of scrutiny of the papers of candidates would start on Monday (today), and would remain continued till March 19. It may be mentioned here that in all 11 seats of Senate including seven general and two each of technocrats and women had fallen vacant on March 12 after retirement of the senators.

PM grants extension to Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Babar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday granted a one-year extension to Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu.

The prime minister has sent the advisory of the Air Chief Marshal's extension to President Asif Ali Zardari and granted him extension after his approval.

Zaheer Babar is a four-star air force officer and 16th Chief of Air Staff. He



took over command of the air force on March 19, 2021, from his predecessor ACM Mujahid Anwar Khan. It may be noted that Air Chief Zaheer Babar held a meeting with newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif few days ago and discussed matters of national importance.

Nation stands united with Pak Army in war against terror: Mohsin Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi said entire nation was strongly condemning terror attack on Mir Ali check post. He assured the nation that terrorists will be given befitting response for this cowardly act.

In a press statement, Interior Minister said all the martyred jawans including Lt col Syed Kashif Ali were heroes of the nation. Entire nation paid tributes and salutes to the heroes who laid their lives for the security of the country. Mohsin Naqvi said entire nation was united and stood with Pak Army in war against terror. He assured the nation that Pakistan Army will give due response to terrorists.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) jet demonstrating different skills during rehearsal ahead of the Pakistan Day parade on 23rd March in the Federal Capital.

Consumers to bear the brunt as SSGC seeks further hike in gas price

Monitoring Desk

KARACHI: A month after the caretakers burdened the masses with gas price hike on the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) demand, the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) has requested the fuel regulator — the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) — to further increase gas prices from July 2024. The caretaker government had approved a 67% increase in the natural gas tariff with effect from February 1. The tariff was hiked to meet the deadline of the IMF for hiking the gas prices under structural benchmark criteria till February 15, 2024.

In its fresh plea filed with the Ogra, the SSGC requested the fuel regulator to increase in the gas price by Rs274.40 per Metric Million British Thermal Unit

(mmbtu). Citing an estimated Rs79.63 billion revenue shortfall, the SSGC urged Ogra to set average price of one mmbtu gas at Rs1740.80.

A public hearing on the petition is scheduled on March 18 in Karachi, during which the regulatory authority will determine the gas prices. The Ogra will also hear the petition in Quetta on March 20.

It is pertinent to mention here that the IMF wants the government to implement the gas review implementation biannually to reduce the circular debt. Amid the ongoing economic crisis, the newly-elected government would make a formal request to the IMF for a longer and larger size of fresh bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) next month.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Provincial share

The PPP has aptly advised the central government to worry about improving its tax collection rather than eying the provinces' share of tax revenues.

Reacting to recent reports that the IMF wants Pakistan to restart discussions on the 2009 NFC award to correct the 'imbalance' in the centre-provinces distribution of tax resources, PPP Senator Sherry Rehman rejected suggestions that the global lender was interfering in the constitutional framework of resource allocation. "Why would the IMF want to put itself in the middle of changing the NFC formula of Pakistan?" she asked. Her reading of the situation is accurate. Even if the lender wants the provinces to reduce their expenditure to produce a fiscal surplus and share more financial responsibilities with the federation to narrow the nation's burgeoning consolidated fiscal deficit, it would not want to be seen getting caught up in constitutional issues. She also correctly blamed the consistently lower than 9pc federal tax collection — as a ratio of GDP — for the country's fiscal dilemma and the accumulation of a mountain of debt to the tune of \$271bn. The fact of the matter is that some forces favouring a strong centre and weaker federating units have been actively campaigning against, and are demanding an immediate rollback of, the landmark 18th Amendment to the Constitution and the current NFC award, which have accorded the provinces unprecedented administrative, political, and fiscal powers.

The campaign appeared to pick up momentum over the past several years as the country's fiscal predicament worsened. Nevertheless, robust resistance from the smaller provinces and certain political parties, particularly the PPP, and constitutional protection for the existing resource-sharing formula have kept such forces from undoing the changes. The argument that increased provincial autonomy and an enhanced provincial share from the federal tax pool is dangerous for federalism must not be entertained, as the issue touches upon matters related to the future of the country. Any attempt to roll back provincial autonomy and financial powers would lead to greater friction between the centre and provinces, as well as among the federating units, which would harm the state's federal complexion.

Pakistan was envisaged as a federation by its founding fathers, who had promised an autonomous and sovereign status to the constituent units in the Lahore Resolution. However, the dominance of the bureaucracy and successive military rulers favouring a highly centralised state structure prevented the country from becoming a proper federation until the 2008 parliament rectified the situation. It is true that the federal government and provinces still have many unresolved constitutional, administrative and fiscal issues, but the rollback of the existing political and fiscal powers enjoyed by the latter should not be among them. Pakistan's future lies in more democracy and more federalism and not in a centralised state structure.

The plot sickens

Muna Khan

Reality TV shows are my on/off guilty pleasure. I should be more embarrassed to admit this, but here we are. It began with a curiosity for The Kardashians and then it went downhill — shows about rich housewives, home makeovers, hoarders, marrying someone you've never seen. Some are truly terrible, but then you have Traitors (the original British version) which is addictive and very good.

As a (ahem) connoisseur of such shows, I've realised the boundaries between politics and reality shows have blurred. I'm not saying anything new. Donald Trump has shown how it's no longer ludicrous to think a reality TV star can become president. Kanye West also attempted a run. People want Oprah Winfrey to run. Taylor Swift influences elections. Ukraine and Guatemala have elected comedians as presidents. Politicians in the UK have participated in reality shows, including George Galloway on Big Brother in 2006, when he was an MP, and 'Brexit king' Nigel Farage received a whopping £1.5 million for I'm a Celebrity last year.

Celebrities have quit movie careers in Bollywood, for example, to join politics. And, of course, we have Imran Khan. He has turned his celebrity status into political success. His politics relies heavily on charisma, drama and spin — components of reality TV. Everyone else is copying his style but are poor imitations. Bad behaviour is rewarded in both fields; there is no accountability either. The worse your behaviour, the more you are lauded. And the media you perform on, profits. But reality TV isn't real. The audience sees an edited version, a nar-

ative that suits the performers. Like our politicians.

Writing in Political Studies Review in 2019, John Street explained how, over the years, there's been a 'mediatisation and personalisation of politics, resulting in politicians being treated as celebrities and not politicians, as the brilliant media scholar Neil Postman wrote, are held to different standards. Well before the term 'fake news', social media and the internet, celebrity politicians were not held accountable for their falsehoods. US president Ronald Reagan said apartheid in South Africa for ending segregation, when it hadn't. But voters didn't care for accuracy, they saw him as someone who tapped into their emotions.

Politicians have learned that being a celebrity is lucrative and they benefit financially, like Khan's inner circle did. Of course, all political parties benefit by working for corporate, military and business interests, but they've never sold themselves as revolutionary.

While the issues facing Pakistan are serious — we have been at a nazuk mor since before you and I existed — politics is debased and unserious. It is parties throwing accusations at each other and trying to outwit the other in whataboutery. Policy matters are linked to slogans. Everyone's in on it; subsidised atta has Nawaz's face on the bags, as if we forget who's in power there.

This plays out every night on our airwaves and social media, where everyone's vying for virality. To remain relevant, one has to up the ante, which is where tactics from the celebrity playbook help. Two recent incidents illustrate

this example. One involves PTI MNA Shandana Gulzar, who implicated Maryam Nawaz in an audio leak wherein she claims the now chief minister told someone to "run over [PTI worker] Zilley Shah". The FIA has summoned her and she will likely be asked to produce evidence. In the same week, Sher Afzal Marwat accused Maryam Nawaz of plotting to kill him and paid Indian business tycoon Jindal \$100,000 for this hit. This is the level of politics — and it sells.

It is, as Street wrote, "the art of performance, the art of being celebrity". I don't believe politicians say outlandish things because they believe them but because they want to emulate their leaders and remain close to him/her. They are expected to behave this way. And, they are not held accountable for their claims by the media; some journalists ask tough questions, but audiences don't care about veracity. Could action by FIA, for example, against Gulzar serve as a deterrent?

The day the UN released its Human Development Index Report showing Pakistan's decline in its position to 164 out of 193 countries, our media was busy analysing the meeting between KP chief minister and the men he spent a long time denigrating. I understand it was an important event, but it is an example of priorities. Of our politicians, policymakers and the media. This is the only reality I have known: No one cares about maternal health, child development, sanitation, access to water, gas, bijli, even X. Our political leaders and their handlers have lost the plot. The media is allowing lies to air as entertainment. And no one wins a prize for guessing how this will end. -- Courtesy Dawn

Focus on actions

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

A 10-point priority agenda evolved during various conversations convened by the Sanobar Institute was laid out in my article, 'Setting priorities', last week. However, setting priorities can only be effective if accompanied by an implementable action plan. To that end, there are essentially five sets of actions that the government should consider in order to implement these priorities.

First, to achieve sustainable and uninterrupted political stability, the prime minister should invite the opposition for a national dialogue involving all political parties in parliament as well as major institutions, including the judiciary, ECP, the military, intelligence agencies, the civil bureaucracy, and those representing trade and industry.

The dialogue should focus on a five-point agenda: (i) strengthening local governments, which are not receiving their due share from the resources devolved to the provinces; (ii) strengthening the ECP, which must ensure intra-party elections and transparently acquired funding for poll campaigns; (iii) reforming NAB, which has been politicised, thus depleting the confidence of bureaucracy and business; (iv) reconsidering the NFC award, which has left the centre too resource-deficient to handle debt payments and defence costs; and (v) a solemn commitment by all stakeholders to ensure, within their respective domains, merit, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

The outcome of the dialogue should be a national consensus to strengthen democratic norms and conduct, ensure the rule of law and meritocracy; and enable the continuity of economic policies — a kind

of charter of democracy, good governance, and economy.

Second, restoring economic stability needs multipronged actions. The prime minister has already constituted a committee to suggest ways to reduce wasteful expenditure in the central government. The real test would be to implement the recommendations. A similar effort is required in the provinces. Federal ministries dealing with subjects already devolved to the provinces under the 18th Amendment should be immediately dissolved. It is a welcome development that the process of privatisation of loss-making SOEs like PIA and the Steel Mills has gained momentum. And the new finance minister has prioritised negotiations with the IMF for a Pakistan-owned, Pakistan-led programme, debt restructuring, broadening the tax base, exports-led growth, and digitising the economy.

For relief from the pressure of price hikes affecting ordinary people, regional trade opportunities, however limited in scope, should be explored, particularly for the provision of vegetables, fruit and other essential commodities. The government should not spend scarce resources on populist measures like dole-outs and charity programmes. Instead, efforts should be focused on creating jobs via an enabling environment for IT and microfinance.

The much-needed civil service reforms should be implemented. No new task force or commission is required as considerable work has already been done, including by the Ishrat Husain-led committee, which had made doable and cost-effective recommendations.

Third, the newly completed port in Gwadar should be immediately operationalised to handle

more commercial traffic, with a mandatory share of jobs for Gwadar and other Balochistan residents. Border markets with Iran should be expanded at the three main crossing points to create jobs for Balochistan's people. The new government has shown seriousness about setting up Special Economic Zones. Likewise, opening SIFC to private sector investments could stimulate action in key sectors of the economy. The SIFC should create more public awareness about its achievements so far to counter the misgivings some people have about it.

Fourth, the office of national security adviser should be energised to effectively coordinate our response to security challenges. For internal security, a task force should be set up under the NSA to propose reforms in the police and criminal justice system. Aprosop external security threats, the NSA's office should work with intelligence agencies and other stakeholders to suggest options for decisions by the National Security Committee.

Finally, our foreign policy should be reviewed comprehensively so that it can address the challenges of evolving global and regional geopolitics, particularly major power competition, relations with neighbours, and the geo-economics pivot. To that end, a high-level task force comprising all relevant stakeholders and invitees from academia and think tanks could be constituted within the foreign ministry to propose, within three months, doable and pragmatic foreign policy options.

The above is not an exhaustive list of actions. If implementation is initiated, a stage could be set to undertake broader reforms. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Pak-Iran bilateral trade can be increased up to \$5b: Iranian envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam has said that due to strong economic and trade integration between Pakistan and Iran, bilateral trade can be increased up to \$5 billion a year in the coming few years.

There is a strong possibility of doubling the bilateral trade between the two countries through air, rail and maritime integration, which will prove to be a catalyst in regional and global trade as well, he said while addressing the business community in Islamabad.

The Ambassador said that Pakistan and Iran were geo-strategically very

important countries located at the junction of Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia. Therefore, the land and sea integration of both countries is of great importance in the world of Geo-economy, said a press release issued, he said.

The Iranian envoy said that in order to further improve transit trade between Pakistan and Iran, 12 border trade markets had been opened, in which 6 border markets had been completed and others are in progress, which would usher in a new era of economic integration in both countries.

He said that Gwadar and Chabahar were very

important in maritime trade ties, so both countries should declare both ports as coastal sister ports so that mutual economic development can be achieved jointly. Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam said that both countries were members of major forums like Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), ECO and D-8 in which it was very easy to work on common economic goals.

He said that both China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and BRI mega projects were extremely important for Pakistan and Iran, which can stabilize the economic relations between the two countries.



PESHAWAR: Assistant commissioner inspecting the selling of food items and checking the price control list in the Holy Month of Ramadan during crackdown drive against profiteers, at different areas of Peshawar.

Dubai's Al-Matiah forum empowers global SMEs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Al-Matiah Investment and Business Forum in Dubai, supported by influential patrons, brought together investors and entrepreneurs from nearly 50 countries to strengthen national SMEs through diverse cultural exchange and collaboration.

The forum's primary objective was to build economic bridges connecting the Middle East with the world, presenting Dubai as a hub for entrepreneurial activity. This event not only emphasized Dubai's

strategic importance but also showcased the UAE as a hub for culture and commerce, poised to foster the development of the next generation of Emirati business leaders.

Under the auspices of notable personalities like Sheikh Faisal bin Obaid bin Suhail Al Maktoum, Ali bin Abdullah Al Mualla, Ammar bin Salem Al Qasimi, Sheikh Humaid bin Khalid Al Qasimi, His Excellency Awad Mohammed bin Sheikh Mejren, and His Excellency Dr. Juma Madani, the event signalled a new era in global economic

cooperation.

Dr. Juma Madani, leading Al-Matiah Investment, expressed the forum's essence: "It transcends a mere conference; it's a gathering of sheikhs, ambassadors, and business leaders worldwide, converging to cultivate a dynamic environment of enterprise and innovation."

In a significant development, Al-Matiah Investment forged a strategic partnership with Petrus Bio Energy Do, a pioneering Brazilian company in sustainable agriculture and energy.

Various markets, industrial bodies support PIAF in LCCI elections

LAHORE (INP): To express solidarity with the PIAF in the upcoming elections of Lahore Chambers of Commerce Industry (LCCI), various traders and industrial associations, especially the paper market and Shah Alam Market, Young Traders Association, Beden Road and other markets, delegation visited the PIAF office on Sunday.

The delegation from

Paper Market Ganpat Road was led by APMA former chairman Khamis Saad Butt while the delegation from Young Traders Association of Shah Alam Market was led by Shehzad Aslam and the delegation from Beden Road was led by Tahir Hafeez. On this occasion, the PIAF Chairman Fahimur Rehman Saigol, Pattern-in-chief PIAF and Vice President of SAARC Chamber Mian Anjum Nisar.

Guangxi's foreign trade hits record high in Jan-Feb

NANNING (Xinhua/APP): South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region touched a new high in foreign trade in the first two months of 2024, local authorities said Sunday.

Guangxi's total imports and exports in January and February hit 109.1 billion yuan (about 15.4 billion U.S. dollars), up 18.9 percent year on year. Exports rose 37.2 percent year on year to 60.59 billion yuan, and imports increased 1.9 percent to 48.51 billion.

Reducing interest rates to devalue rupee, raise inflation: Mughal

ISLAMABAD (INP): President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), Murtaza Mughal has said that demand of the business community to reduce the interest rate was unjustified, as it will weaken the rupee and trigger inflation.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said an interest rate cut would allow the government to start unnecessary expenditures that are not required at this point.

Murtaza Mughal said that electricity and gas prices have troubled the entire country. People are going bankrupt while factories are closing down.

Many factories were running at half their production capacity;

therefore, the demand to reduce the electricity and gas tariff was justified, but getting approval from the IMF will be impossible, he added.

The business leader said that increasing the tax net, bringing the non-tax-paying sectors into the tax net, and amending the NFC award have become necessary to save the country.

Restructuring of local and foreign debt has also become necessary. Still, caution is needed in this regard so that it does not hurt the market, he cautioned. Murtaza Mughal said the federal government is considering handing over the electricity distribution companies to the provinces.



MULTAN: A farmer is busy spraying pesticide on the crop at his farm field.

'Modern designs, trends crucial for furniture industry'

LAHORE (APP): Modern designing and new trends in the furniture industry are essential for gaining a competitive edge, driving sales and profitability, enhancing brand image, embracing sustainability, leveraging technology, and expanding into international markets. Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq stated this while talking to a delegation of women entrepreneurs and furniture manufacturers led by Ms Nida Ejaz here on Sunday. He added that

modern designing and new trends play a crucial role in the furniture industry.

By embracing these trends, he said, the furniture manufacturers can thrive in a dynamic and evolving industry. "Modern furniture designs often incorporate technological advancements to provide enhanced functionality and convenience. Integration of features like smart furniture, wireless charging, and IT connectivity can make furniture more appealing to tech-savvy buyers," he observed.



HYDERABAD: A person selecting and purchasing gas cylinder from vendor at Fort road.

Govt should work on fast track plan to address expansive energy issue: Anjum Nisar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has asked the government to work on a fast track plan to address expansive energy issue and priority should be given to the value-added industry in this regard.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that Pakistan's core issue is the high

cost of doing business, which the government needed to bring down to bring the local as well as the export industry at par with global competitors.

Mian Anjum Nisar urged for increasing ease of doing business, lowering cost of production, paying early refunds to solve liquidity crunch, relaxing import policy for industrial raw material, and equalizing the energy tariff across the country.

Technical varsities VCs meet Punjab industries minister

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce, Chaudhry Shafay Hussain has said that government would transform technical universities into real centers of promotion of technical education.

He was talking to Vice Chancellors (VCs) of Technical universities, who called on him here at TEVTA Secretariat (Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority). The minister discussed with VCs the matters relating to teaching process, development issues and future plans of the universities. The VCs informed about the problems of technical universities. While assuring them of resolving the problems of technical universities, Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said, "I will visit the universities soon to review the teaching process and problems." He said the usefulness and importance of technical education cannot be denied in the present era.

Comprehensive plan formed for restoration of KP's law & order situation: CM

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday said that a comprehensive plan has been prepared for restoration of law and order in the province as it was top priority of his government.

He stated this while talking to media during his first ever visit to Dera Ismail Khan after being elected as Chief Minister.

He said the implementation over that plan would be started soon as better law and order situation was imperative for progress of any area.

He said the steps would also be taken for the safety of police and other forces.

The chief minister said the government has restored 'health-card' facility.

"We have to improve the treatment facilities at public hospitals," he said and hoped that soon the people would not have need to visit private hospitals as provision of all facilities would be ensured at public hospitals.

Commenting on the current wave of inflation, he said the provincial government will give Rs 10,000 each to 850,000 deserving families of the province under Ramadan package. It will be handed over to them at their doorstep respectfully, he mentioned.

Moreover, he said the facility of 'Shelter homes'

has been reopened by ensuring all facilities for needy people.

However, he said, the government would also take steps for providing business opportunities to people rather only giving them charity or stipend.

He said the women would be provided employment at their homes and youth would be provided with skill trainings.

He informed that the consultation was underway with other countries regarding provision of employment to people by giving them skills training. After the training, the skilled people of the province would be sent abroad for employment.



LAHORE: Member National Assembly Sardar Shamsheer Mazari and Member of the Punjab Assembly Khizer Mazari call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Food minister's inspections lead to disposal of 2,500kg of spoiled meat

LAHORE: Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin led a comprehensive inspection drive with Punjab Food Authority (PFA) teams in markets in the provincial capital here on Sunday.

The vigorous scrutiny resulted in the disposal of a staggering 2,500 kilograms of spoiled, substandard, and expired meat, bringing a sense of relief to Lahore's residents.

Under the vigilant eye of the provincial minister, the PFA teams descended upon Moghulpura Market, meticulously inspecting meat shops in the vicinity. In addition to swiftly disposing of unfit meat, strict warnings were

issued to violators of food safety regulations.

Talking to media, Food Minister Bilal Yasin revealed that immediate action was taken to seize substandard and expired meat from the shelves of meat shops. He lamented the discovery of foul-smelling meat in unhygienic freezers, underscoring the urgency of situation.

During the inspections, Bilal Yasin noted deficiencies in cleanliness and the presence of pests, urging for swift rectification.

The food minister directed the PFA teams to ensure the comprehensive traceability of meat supplied across Punjab, including Lahore.

Governor attends funeral prayer of Nisar Shakir

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali and Peshawar Mayor Haji Zubair Ali Sunday attended the funeral prayers of late senior journalist Nisar Ahmad Shakir at Asia Gate Peshawar.

He condoled the death of Asif Nisar's father and prayed for patience for the family. The governor said that the services of late Nisar Ahmad Shakir will be remembered.

FIA arrests two outlaws for work visa fraud

MULTAN (APP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) claimed to have arrested two alleged outlaws in a fraud case related to work visas.

According to official sources, the arrested outlaws are identified as Tariq Hussain and Anwar ul Hassan residents of Burewala.

The alleged outlaws took money from a citizen on the promise of sending him to Bahrain on a work visa. However, the outlaws neither returned the money nor sent him a work visa. The aggrieved citizen approached the FIA Multan.

Punjab police sign MoU with private hospital

LAHORE: On the direction of Inspector General Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, measures are being taken to provide best medical facilities to Punjab Constabulary personnel, in continuation of which an MoU has been signed between the Punjab Police and a private hospital group (Farooq Group).

Commander Battalion-V, PC, Abbas Lines, SSP Mian Afnan Ameen said that Punjab Constabulary officials will be provided special discount on laboratory tests and bed expenses at Farooq Hospital. A 100% free treatment facility will be available at Akhtar Saeed Teaching Hospital for the families of police martyrs. Free treatment facilities will be provided to PC Lahore personnel as per hospital policy. This MoU will be applicable to DHA, Iqbal Town, Westwood Colony and Rawalpindi branches of Farooq Hospital.



LAHORE: A large number of women in a queue to get flour bag on subsidies rate.

All tourist sites to open for world soon to enhance country's GDP, says Zahid

PESHAWAR (APP): Zahid Chanzab, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture, Museums and Archeology, Sunday revealed that the tourism industry generates 30 billion dollars in revenue to the national economy, which is 6% of the country's GDP.

"Nature has generously blessed our province with the world's best hill stations and tourist destinations and only focusing on this sector can revolutionize the economy of the province that can ameliorate the quality of life of the poor over here and the present PTI-led KP govt is quite serious to exploit all such vital sectors on crash grounds," he added.

Trillion of rupees in income can be obtained from the tourism sector to spend on ameliorating a lot of the poor and contributing in restoration of the economy and infrastructure of the province, he maintained. He expressed this during his visit to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) headquarters in Peshawar cantt wherein he went around various sections.



PESHAWAR: PESCO workers are busy repairing the transformer in the Tehsil area.

Competition in KP tough for Senate poll

PESHAWAR (APP): The competition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also tough in the Senate elections with a total of 42 candidates having submitted nomination papers for eleven seats of the Senate, an official of the Provincial Election Commission said here Sunday. He said that there will be a contest between 10 candidates for two posts of Technocrat, 25 candidates for 7 general seats submitted their nomination papers, and 7 candidates have submitted their nomination papers for two reserved seats for women.

The official of the Provincial Election Commission disclosed that Azam Khan Swati, Qazi Muhammad Anwar Advocate, Waqar Ahmed Qazi, Dr. Hamad Mahmood Cheema, Khalid Masood, Fazal Hanan, Dilawar Khan, Kaiser Khan, Noorul Haque Qadri and Syed Irshad Hussain are candidates for the Technocrat seat. Irfan Saleem, Muhammad Talha Mehmood, Dilawar Khan, Faisal Javed, Mirza Muhammad Afridi, Azhar Qazi Mashwani, Niaz Ahmed, Waqas Orkazai, Fazal Hanan, Asif Iqbal, Azam Khan Swati, Murad Saeed,

De-siltation of 171 canals of DG Khan zone to start today

DG KHAN (APP): The de-siltation of 171 small and big canals of Dera Ghazi Khan zone will start on Monday, March 18.

The task has been given to remove silt from 1625 kilometers long canals by April 20.

Superintending Engineer Irrigation Department Khan Shaukat Hayat said that provincial, divisional, and district-level committees have been formed to monitor the proper de-siltation of canals.

He said that the monitoring land information management system has also been made functional by the provincial government.

There will be no wastage of water by the de-siltation and the canal water will reach the tail-end farmers in abundance.

He said that if anyone has any objection or suggestion related to the de-siltation, it could be submitted in writing to his office and the Canal division.

14 dead, 1122 injured in 1063 road accidents in Punjab

LAHORE: At least fourteen persons were killed and 1122 injured in 1063 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

Out of these, 533 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 589 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals. Furthermore, the analysis showed those 626 drivers, 44 underage drivers, 133 pedestrians,

International News

Russia election to tighten Putin's grip, opponents stage noon protest

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin is poised to tighten his grip on power on Sunday in a Russian election that is certain to deliver him a landslide victory, though some opponents staged a symbolic noon protest at polling stations against his rule.

Putin, who rose to power in 1999, is poised to win a new six-year term that, if he completes it, would enable him to overtake Josef Stalin and become Russia's longest-serving leader for more than 200 years.

The election comes just over two years since Putin triggered the deadliest European conflict since World War Two by ordering the invasion of Ukraine. He casts it as a "special military operation".

War has hung over the three-day election: Ukraine has repeatedly attacked oil refineries in Russia, shelled Russian regions and sought to pierce Russian borders with proxy forces - a move Putin said would not be left unpunished.

While Putin's re-election is not in doubt given his control over Russia and the absence of any real challengers, the former KGB spy wants to show that he has the overwhelming support of Russians. Voting ends at 1800 GMT on Sunday.

The Kremlin has sought a high turnout, and as polls opened for a third day in western Russia, officials said the turnout in the first two days had already reached 63% nationwide.

An exit poll will be published shortly after voting ends at 1800 GMT.

Supporters of Alexei Navalny, who died in an Arctic prison last month, had called on Russians to come out at a "Noon against Putin" protest to show their dissent against a leader they cast as a corrupt autocrat.

"Alexei was fighting for very simple things: for freedom of speech, for fair elections, for democracy and our right to live without corruption and war," Navalny's widow, Yulia, said in a message to a rally in Budapest on March 15.

"Putin is not Russia. Russia is not Putin."

There was no independent tally of how many of Russia's 114 million voters turned out at noon to show opposition to Putin.



GAZA CITY: Palestinians inspect the rubble of a building after it was destroyed in an Israeli strike the night before in the Rimal neighbourhood. The head of Israeli intelligence is expected to lead ceasefire talks in Qatar in response to a new proposal from Hamas.

Mossad chief may lead Doha talks on Gaza

DOHA: The head of Israeli intelligence is expected to lead ceasefire talks with mediators which resume in Qatar today (Sunday) in direct response to a new proposal from Hamas, a source close to the talks said on Saturday. The talks between Mossad head David Barnea, Qatar's prime minister and Egyptian officials will focus on remaining gaps between Israel and Hamas including over prisoner releases and humanitarian aid, the source said.

Israel had said on Friday it would be sending a delegation to Doha, but did not spell out when it would do so or who would take part. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was expected to convene the security cabinet before the talks. Israeli officials were not immediately available to comment on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

Barnea was involved in previous significant pushes for a deal. A short-lived truce in November was agreed and came into effect after his participation in talks in Doha. His last meeting with Qatar's prime minister in January led to a proposal for a temporary ceasefire that Hamas ultimately rejected.

Sixteen Nigerian soldiers killed in community clashes in Delta state

ABUJA: Sixteen Nigerian Army soldiers were surrounded by youths and killed earlier this week after they attempted to quell community clashes in the oil-producing southern Delta state, an army spokesperson said on Saturday.

The troops from 181 Amphibious Battalion had returned to the conflict in the Okuoma community when they were killed on Thursday. Brigadier General Tukur Gusau said in a statement.

No more 'normal-sized babies' in Gaza, says UN

UNITED NATIONS: The humanitarian situation in Gaza is a "nightmare" for mothers and babies, with doctors reporting small and sickly newborns, stillbirths and women forced to undergo C-sections without adequate anesthesia, a UN official said.

"I'm personally leaving Gaza this week terrified for the one million women and girls of Gaza... and most especially for the 180 women who are giving birth every single day," Dominic Allen, UN Population Fund (UNFPA) representative for the state of Palestine, said in a video news conference from Jerusalem.

"Doctors are reporting that they no longer see normal-sized babies," Allen said after visiting hospitals still providing maternity services in the north of Gaza, where need is especially great.

"What they do see though, tragically, is more neonatal deaths, caused in part by malnutrition, dehydration and complications." The numbers of complicated deliveries are roughly twice what they were before the crisis with Israel bled — with mothers stressed, fearful, underfed and exhausted — and caregivers often lacking necessary supplies.

"We have had reports of insufficient anaesthetic being available" for Caesarean sections, "which again is unthinkable." "Those mothers should be wrapping their arms around their children," he said. "Those children should not be wrapped in a body bag."

Israel has defended its policies as it pursues its stated goal of destroying Hamas, saying the UN should send more aid to the territory.



Voters cast their ballots at a polling station on the final day of the presidential election in Moscow, Russia.

Venezuela's Maduro announces candidacy for July re-election

CARACAS: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro will run for a second re-election to secure another six-year term in voting planned for July 28, the ruling Socialist party said.

Maduro, a 61-year-old former union leader, was proclaimed as the Socialist party's candidate by Vice President Diosdado Cabello, and took the stage at a large sports arena to address supporters.

"There's just one outcome, the people's victory on July 28," Maduro said, wearing a bright red zippered jacket.

"They haven't been able to stop us, nor will they be able to."

Recent polls show 13.9% of Venezuelans plan to vote for Maduro, far behind opposition candidate Maria Corina Machado's 54.5%.

Climate protesters under fire in Europe, says UN

GENEVA: Environmental activists are increasingly facing hostility across Europe, a UN expert said, warning that the very right to protest was "at risk" in countries usually considered beacons of democracy.

Michel Forst, the UN special rapporteur on environmental defenders, said that he was deeply troubled by the hardening tone against climate activists in countries including France, Austria, Germany and Britain.

Government ministers have been throwing about terms like "eco-terrorists" and "Green Taliban" to describe non-violent activists, he claimed, also blaming some media reporting for contributing to an increasingly hostile public attitude. "It creates a sort of chilling effect," warned Forst, an independent expert appointed under the UN's Aarhus Convention — a legally-binding text that provides for justice in environmental matters.

Trump predicts the end of US democracy if he loses 2024 election

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump said on Saturday if he does not win November's presidential election it will mean the likely end of American democracy. The Republican presidential candidate, speaking to supporters in Ohio, made the claim after repeating his baseless assertion that his 2020 election defeat to Democratic President Joe Biden was the result of election fraud.

During an outdoor speech that was whipped by strong winds and punctuated by some profane language, Trump predicted that if he does not win the Nov. 5 general election, American democracy will come to an end. "If we don't win this election, I don't think you're going to have another election in this country," Trump said.

Trump, who is under criminal indictment in Georgia for trying to overturn the result of the 2020 election there.

Bolsonaro says he does not fear being put on trial

Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro said he does not fear being put on trial, one day after a police investigation revealed the far-right politician tried to cop the country's military chiefs in a coup plan to overturn his 2022 election defeat. Bolsonaro did not refer directly to the allegations made by two armed forces commanders that he had summoned them to discuss a possible coup d'etat to prevent leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva from returning to power.

EU to bolster Egypt ties with billions in funding

CAIRO: European leaders are expected to announce a multi-billion euro funding package and an upgraded relationship with Egypt in Cairo on Sunday, part of a push to stem migrant flows across the Mediterranean that has been criticised by rights groups.

The agreement is designed to enhance cooperation in areas including renewable energy, trade, and security while delivering grants, loans and other funding over the next three years to support Egypt's faltering economy.

European governments have long been worried about the risk of instability in Egypt, a country of 106 million people that has been struggling to raise foreign currency and where economic adversity has pushed increasing numbers to migrate in recent years.

Inflation has been running close to record highs and many Egyptian say they struggle to get by. Over the past month, however, the financial pressure on the government has eased as Egypt has struck a record deal for Emirati investment, expanded its loan programme with the IMF, and sharply devalued its currency.

Diplomats say Egypt's strategic importance has been underscored by the conflict in neighbouring Sudan, which has created the world's biggest displacement crisis, and the war in Gaza, which borders Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Egypt has been the main conduit for international humanitarian aid sent to Gaza, and along with Qatar and the United States has been trying to mediate a truce between Israel and Hamas. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will lead a delegation on Sunday that also includes the Italian and Greek prime ministers and the Cypriot president.



LAHORE: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khawaja Saad Rafique calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Ayaz, Dr. Amiri discuss bolstering parliamentary, economic relations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Ambassador of Iran, Dr. Amiri Moghaddam Sunday discussed bolstering parliamentary and economic relations between Iran and Pakistan.

During the meeting, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq reaffirmed Pakistan's deep-rooted fraternal bond with Iran, steeped in shared history, culture, and religion, said a news release.

He emphasized the need to strengthen these ties further by expanding cooperation across all mutual areas of interest, particularly in energy and trade, to uplift the economies of both nations, especially those living on both sides of the common border.

The Speaker highlighted the strategic geographical positioning of both countries, presenting significant opportunities for regional and global connectivity and trade promotion. While acknowledging the positive trajectory in bilateral trade, he noted that there is untapped potential that both nations should explore.

He stressed the importance of cordially addressing pending issues related to banking, trade, transportation, and energy. Additionally, he expressed optimism about resolving issues related to the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline.

Ayaz Sadiq underscored the pivotal role of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening bilateral relations. He expressed in-

tent to actively engage all relevant stakeholders regularly to support governmental efforts in achieving the common goal of expanded economic cooperation.

Dr. Amiri Moghaddam congratulated Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on his re-election and extended warm Ramadan greetings.

He praised the Speaker's vision for collective growth and assured full commitment and cooperation from Iran across all areas.

The Ambassador also informed the speaker about the upcoming visit of the Iranian President to Pakistan, highlighting its significance in advancing bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation in various sectors.

CDWP approves Rs. 4.54bn Energy Sector Project for Gwadar District

ISLAMABAD (INP): To address the electricity demands of Gwadar, the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) approved a crucial "revised" energy project.

This project focuses on enhancing the transmission line infrastructure for the coastal city, marking a significant step forward in meeting Gwadar's energy needs.

The CDWP meeting, led by Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan, sanctioned the energy project for Gwadar along with another initiative in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province following detailed discussions.

The approved energy sector project, titled "Construction of 220kV Transmission Line (28km) along with 2nd Circuit Stringing of 132kV Transmission Line from Jiwani to Gwadar (94km) Revised," is valued at Rs. 4540.01 million, Gwadar Pro reported.

Furthermore, the project encompasses the construction of a 220/132kV Transmission Line from Gwad to Jiwani (Zero Point) and the second Circuit Stringing of the existing 132 kV SDT Jiwani-Gwadar (old) 99 KM Transmission Line (QESCO portion).

This project is set to significantly improve the power infrastructure in Gwadar, representing a crucial development in addressing the energy needs of this burgeoning economic hub, Gwadar Pro reported.

Its primary objective is to provide an uninterrupted power supply to consumers across all categories and enhance the overall commercial viability of the power sector.

The project entails the construction of grid stations and includes the establishment of a 132kV (AIS) grid station in Jiwani, featuring a 132 KV Line Bay facing the Jiwani -



RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir pays condolence to martyrs family after Funeral prayers of Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed at Chaklala Garrison.

President rejects workplace harassment case against FCE Prof.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President of Pakistan has rejected the appeal filed by Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MOFE&PT), challenging the order issued by the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment.

This decision comes in the wake of a contentious case involving allegations of harassment against Dr. Samia Dogar, a former director at the Federal College of Education (FCE).

Earlier on December 8, 2023, the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment issued a final order directing the Ministry of Education and Professional Training to reinstate Dr. Samia Dogar to her previous position as a Professor (BS-20).

This decision followed an appeal filed by Dr. Samia against Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary under the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010. Key concerns

were raised by the Ombudsman regarding the initial inquiry committee's proceedings, highlighting serious violations of Dr. Samia Dogar's due process rights. These included the absence of cross-examination of witnesses and the failure to examine crucial evidence such as a video recording of a Zoom call. Consequently, the Ombudsman set aside the initial inquiry committee's report and directed the Ministry of Education to reinstate Dr. Samia and conduct a fresh inquiry into the harassment complaint.

The Education Ministry was given a strict deadline to provide its findings within 30 days.

Meanwhile, Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, contested the orders of the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment and filed a representation with the president of Pakistan.

However, after due consideration, the President upheld the decision, refusing Waseem Ajmal's appeal.

Solar lamps distributed among more than 100 houses in Railway Colony

LAHORE (INP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday said that resolution of the problems of masses was topmost priority of the present elected government.

Addressing a ceremony here he said, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz had always served the people of Pakistan with utmost dedication and under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan will make strides towards progress and prosperity.

He said that electricity is supplied in the area merely for two to three hours in this particular area of Harna.

While on the other hand, people were also upset about the excessive bills of electricity, he added.

The former Minister mentioned that around 15,000 solar lights have been distributed in backward areas of different districts of the province.

In addition to this, ration is also being arranged for 800-1000 families by the Health Balochistan.

The distribution of ration would be started among the deserving families soon, he announced.

Promoting sports in Balochistan among top priorities, says secretary

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Sports and Youth Balochistan Dr. Javed Anwar Shahwani on Sunday said that it is the responsibility of the government to provide sports opportunities to the athletes.

The Department of Sports and Youth Affairs of Balochistan has created the best strategy to ensure the best opportunities to the youth.

In a statement issued here, the secretary said that promotion of sports in Balochistan is among our top priorities for which practical steps are being taken.

He said that like every year, this year also 23 March will be celebrated in a grand manner and sports competitions will be organized in all the districts of Balochistan for which instructions have been given to all district sports officers.

Dr. Javed Anwar Shahwani further said that best facilities will be provided to the athletes in the festival.



QUETTA: Member of Provincial Assembly Bakht Kakar planting trees during the tree plantation campaign on the bypass.

FIA arrests seven human traffickers, hawala hundi operators

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Sunday claimed to have arrested a total of seven individuals, including four wanted culprits, allegedly involved in human trafficking and operating illegal money exchange business.

The FIA has vowed to continue its efforts to root out such unlawful practices and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Earlier in the day, responding to the report of the Libya and Greece boat accident, the FIA black-listed 87 officers across the country from being posted in the immigration department.

As per FIA spokesperson, revealed that the individuals were arrested from different cities across the country including Multan, DG Khan, and Bahawalpur.

The FIA spokesperson reported that the apprehended individuals were found to be in possession

Roof collapse leaves 6 dead and 4 injured in South Waziristan

PESHAWAR (INP): A devastating incident struck the Ragzai area of Barmal Tehsil in South Waziristan on Monday when the roof of a house tragically collapsed, claiming the lives of six people and injuring four others.

Among the deceased were three men, two children, and a woman, according to rescue officials who swiftly responded to the incident.

Emergency respond-

Amnesty Int'l urges govt to restore X in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Amnesty International has demanded the immediate restoration of the social media platform 'X' from the government of Pakistan.

Amnesty, along with thirty-one civil society organizations, has signed a joint statement urging Pakistani authorities to restore access to X platform. The statement stated that such actions not only violate fundamental rights such as freedom of expression.



QUETTA: Sardar Rab Nawaz Kurd, Agha Ali, Ali Raza Ahmedzai and other meeting with MPA Mir Liaquat Ali Lehri.

AJK President urges unified action against India's Kashmir agenda

MIRPUR (APP): Azad Jammu Kashmir President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry emphasized the need for unified efforts to counter India's disruptive agenda in the region.

Speaking at an Iftar dinner on Sunday, he highlighted the launch of a public awareness campaign from Mirpur aimed at exposing the human rights violations by Indian forces in Occupied Kashmir and advocating for Kashmiri self-determination on the global stage. Chaudhry criticized Indian Prime Minister Modi's use of Kashmir as a political tool, alleging it to be a ploy to secure electoral gains.

He called for collective action to address the worsening situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and underscored the responsibility of all Kashmiris in advancing the freedom movement.

Regarding local issues, Chaudhry pledged to address concerns in Mirpur, including the Rathoa Haryam Bridge issue, and announced efforts to improve road infrastructure in the area. In addressing unemployment, he promised opportunities based on merit for educated youth.

Chaudhry's remarks highlighted a commitment to both local development and the broader Kashmiri struggle for rights and autonomy.

He urged overseas Kashmiris to advocate for the cause internationally, emphasizing the resilience of Kashmiris against Indian oppression despite escalating violence in the region.

Resolution of masses' problems govt's top priority: Tarar

LAHORE (INP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday said that resolution of the problems of masses was topmost priority of the present elected government.

Addressing a ceremony here he said, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz had always served the people of Pakistan with utmost dedication and under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan will make strides towards progress and prosperity.

Govt collects Rs 142 tax & levy per liter on petrol, diesel

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistani government has revealed details on the taxes and levies collected on petrol and diesel. Sources report that the government collects Rs 82 per liter as tax on both petrol and diesel, with an additional Rs 60 per liter levy. This translates to a total collection of Rs 475 billion from consumers in the first six months, with a target of Rs 920 to 970 billion projected for the entire year. According to media reports, in a separate announcement, the government has decided to maintain petrol prices.

Aleem Khan vows to swiftly resolving public interest matters

LAHORE (INP): Federal Minister for Privatization, Abdul Aleem Khan, has pledged to address long-standing public interest issues in NA-117 with top priority. During an Iftar gathering with former chairman, vice chairman, and councilors in his constituency NA-117, he, also the President of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), emphasized the importance of

Feasibility study for construction of Gwadar Expressway Phase II underway

GWADAR (INP): As a practical step towards the expansion of Gwadar Expressway Phase II of Gwadar Port, the Gwadar Port Authority (GPA), Ministry of Maritime Affairs has floated a tender to hire the services of consultancy firms (National & International) for survey and feasibility study for the execution of the project.

The Gwadar Expressway Phase II, with a length of 10.5 kilometers, aims to connect the Gwadar Port with New Gwadar International Airport.

Any company registered as a consultant with the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), with relevant experience, and providing an affidavit confirming non-involvement in any arbitration or litigation with any government agency or department can apply for the project.

The consulting firms shall be engaged via quality and cost-based selection as per Public Procurement Regulatory Rules while single stage two envelope bidding procedures as per PPRA rule 36(b) will be adopted.

Companies can submit all required documents by April 17, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday.

Gwadar Eastbay Expressway is the main artery of Gwadar Port through which the entire traffic of the port will flow.

The objective of Eastbay Expressway is to provide primary connectivity of the Port & its Free Zone with the network of National Highways for smooth logistic transportation of import, export, and transit goods.

The 19-kilometer Gwadar Expressway Phase I was completed and inaugurated on June 3, 2022.



QUETTA: Vehicles passing through sewerage water accumulated on the Jinnah road need the attention of concern authorities.

Muhammad Ali Achakzai condemns suicide attack at security forces in NW

Independent Report QUETTA: The social and political leader of Chaman, Muhammad Ali Achakzai has strongly condemned the cowardly suicide attack at the check post of security forces in North Waziristan.

In a condemnation statement issued here on Sunday, Muhammad Ali Achakzai said that the security forces humiliated the sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan by attacking the forces.

He said that the morale of security forces and nation would not be down through such cowardly acts.

He said that every Pakistani is grieved over the martyrdom of Army Officers and jawans and share grief with their families.

He also paid rich tributes to the brave officers and jawans who embraced martyrdom in the incident of terrorism.

He also stressed the need to take strict measures against terrorism in the country.

He said that the people of Balochistan are standing by their security forces.

PML-N's Asif Kirmani denies of applying for Senate ticket

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader, Dr Asif Kirmani has said that he hasn't applied for Senate ticket.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that it was not true that PML-N has not awarded Senate ticket to him.

Dr Asif Kirmani said, "I am in Muslim League-N and still consider Nawaz Sharif as my leader."

He further stated that he hasn't applied for Senate ticket, neither interested nor contacted anyone in this connection.

The political leader said that he was affiliated with PML-N by birth and don't need certificate of loyalty from anyone.

PTI fires back at PML-N: Qaiser accuses ministers of exploiting 'martyrs' for political gains

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Asad Qaiser, the former National Assembly speaker and prominent PTI leader, on Sunday hit back at federal ministers Khawaja Asif and Attaullah Tarar, who charged his party with running a smear campaign against the martyrs of Pakistan military and law enforcement agencies.

"The PTI has always recognised and honoured the sacrifices made by soldiers defending the country's borders," Qaiser asserted while speaking to a group of reporters.

["Defence Minister]

Khawaja Asif and [Information Minister] Attaullah Tarar's misleading propaganda about the martyrs is regrettable," he remarked.

In a post on social media platform X, Qaiser emphasised that "those using the soldiers' martyrdom for their political gains are not the well-wishers of the nation."

"The nation is proud of each and every soldier protecting the country," averred the PTI leader.

PTI leader Barrister Saif also came down hard on the PML-N, accusing them of exploiting the martyrs for political gains.

Katcha dacoits shoot two captives dead; throw their bodies into river

KASHMIRE (INP): The dacoits of katcha area who had kidnapped two persons a few days ago, have thrown their bodies into the River Indus after murdering them brutally on Sunday.

The dacoits shot Ahsan and Shehzad, both masons by profession, dead when they saw them fleeing.



QUETTA: People are busy in buying food items before Iftar times as demands of food items increased in city during the Holy Month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak, in Quetta.