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

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PML-N's Ayaz Sadiq elected NA speaker in protest-marred session

Ayaz pledges to conduct affairs of NA in accordance with constitution

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq was elected as the speaker of the National Assembly on Friday after the conclusion of the voting process.

The PML-N politician defeated the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed independent lawmaker Malik Aamir Dogar, who was supported by the Sunni Ittehad (SIC) Council lawmakers in the House.

Sadiq won the speaker's contest with 199 votes, gaining a majority from the members of the PML-N, PPP and other lawmakers backing his nomination in the lower house.

This is the second time that he has become

the speaker.

Sadiq had served as the speaker from 2013-2018 in the 14th National Assembly. The polling for the election of the National Assembly speaker has been completed and the counting of votes is underway in the session that has been marred by protests of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) lawmakers. Sadiq will now be administered oath by outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf.

After the oath-taking, the new speaker will then take charge of the house forthwith. Ashraf will, subsequently, step down from his position.

As the first order of business Sadiq will now hold elections for his deputy. Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Syed



ISLAMABAD: Raja Pervaiz Ashraf administered the oath to Sardar Ayaz Sadiq as Speaker National Assembly.

Ghulam Mustafa and SIC's Junaid Akbar will contest for the slot.

Today's session The NA session was convened today to elect the speaker and deputy speaker during which opposition lawmakers chanted slogans against alleged

rigging in the Feb 8 polls.

Before the session started SIC's parliamentary party meeting was held in the house's lobby, where they vowed to continue their protest in the assembly. This is the second consecutive day that SIC has been protesting

in the National Assembly over "rigged" results. As the session began, Speaker Ashraf asked if there were any new members present who had missed the oath-taking a day earlier.

As no new members came forward, the speaker then gave the floor to PTI-backed Omar Ayub Khan to speak on a point of order.

The lawmaker alleged that foreigners were present in the house.

"People who got fake mandate have entered the house, hence, they should be expelled," said Omar, adding that "prisoner number 804", the number assigned to PTI founder Imran Khan in Adiala Jail, should be brought to the Assembly.



QUETTA: Unopposed elected Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti talking to media persons. PPP Provincial President, Changez Jamali, Nawab Sanaullah Zahri, Ali Madad Jatak and others are also present.

Have to obtain at least 33 votes in today's session for election: Sarfraz Bugti named new Chief Minister Balochistan unopposed; likely to be elected today

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Member Provincial Assembly from Dera Bugti, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has been named unopposed as the Chief Minister Balochistan on Friday.

The nomination of Sarfraz Bugti as Chief Minister was made by the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) central leadership after consultation with the parliamentary members and coalition partners, as confirmed by the sources.

No other candidate submitted nomination papers except him, confirmed the Secretary Balochistan Assembly, Tahir Shah Kakar on Friday evening.

The Secretary Assembly said that Mr. Bugti has

to secure at least 33 votes in the today's session to be elected as Chief Minister.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti was elected as the MPA on February 8, 2024 from PB-10, Dera Bugti. He would be formally elected as Chief Minister in the session of provincial assembly summoned at 11:00 AM today (Saturday).

Earlier, he submitted his nomination papers for the Chief Minister-ship in the provincial assembly secretariat the same afternoon.

At the outset, four nomination papers were submitted in the assembly for CM-ship of Sarfraz Bugti. The members of assembly belonging to PPP and PML-N were included

in the proposers and seconders in the nomination papers.

They were included: Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Nawab Changez Marri, Sardar Sarfraz Chakar Domki, Mir Asim Kurd, Mir Zahoor Buledi, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetrani, S.M Patrick.

As per the agenda issued by the Provincial Assembly secretariat, the members of provincial assembly would elect any of the members as Chief Minister.

It may be mentioned here that Mir Sarfraz Bugti has served as the Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs after his election from Dera Bugti in 2013.

Ali Amin Gandapur elected 16th KP CM by two-third majority

KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur demands CEC's resignation in fiery victory speech; Demands judicial inquiry into May 9 incidents

PESHAWAR (Online): Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has been elected as the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He secured 90 votes, during the session of the provincial assembly held in Peshawar today.

PML (N) candidate for the Chief Minister slot Ibadullah Khan secured 16 votes.

Speaking in the House after his election, newly elected Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur said efforts

will be made for bringing reforms in system of justice and accountability in the province.

He said laws will be enacted from this assembly for curbing corruption in society. He said terrorism has badly affected the province and efforts will be made for lasting peace.

Ali Amin Gandapur said the new provincial government would expand the tax base to increase revenue collection. He said tourism and mining will be promoted for the development of the province. Ali Amin Gandapur said job opportunities will be created for the youth.

Speaking on this occasion, opposition leader Ibadullah Khan said all out cooperation will be extended to the government for welfare of the people.



PESHAWAR: Ali Amin Gandapur speaks on the assembly floor after being elected as Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, at KP Assembly in Peshawar.

ECP fixes March 9 for presidential election

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday announced the schedule for the presidential election to be held on March 9.

According to the schedule, the candidates may submit their nomination papers for the presidential election, until Saturday noon in Islamabad and four provincial capitals—Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta.

Nomination papers will undergo scrutiny by the Returning Officer in Islamabad by 10 am on Monday (March 4). Candidates have the option to withdraw their nomination papers before the Returning Officer in Islamabad until

noon on Tuesday, (March 5).

On the same day, the list of candidates will be made public.

Candidates can opt out of the contest by March 6, and polling is scheduled to take place from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm on March 9 at Parliament House in Islamabad and the provincial Assembly buildings in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta.

An alliance of major political parties, including Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP), has nominated Asif Ali Zardari for the presidency. Asif Zardari had previously served from 2008 to 2013.



ISLAMABAD: A view of farewell ceremony organized at the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in honor of the Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi.

IHC awards jail sentence to DC, SSP ICT in contempt case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday awarded six month imprisonment sentence to Deputy Commissioner ICT Irfan Nawaz Memon while four month to SSP Operations Malik Jameel Zafer in a contempt of court case for issuance of MPO orders against Shahryar Khan Afridi.

The court also announced two month jail sentence to SHO Margalla Police Station Nasir Mehmood in the same case and, however, discharged SP Farooq Buttari from the charges.

The court suspended the sentences of the accused for one month and said that they would be

sent to Adiala Jail if they failed to file the appeals against their convictions within the said time.

IHC's Justice Babar Sattar pronounced the 73 pages verdict which was earlier reserved.

The court also imposed Rs.100,000 fine against the each accused and ordered to distribute the amount among the affected of MPO orders.

The court said that the amount was not a compensation to the petitioners rather it was just symbolic step. The order said that the executive powers were associated with the elected representatives of public and state would use these powers through them.

PTI calls NA Speaker, Dy without reserved seats allocation unconstitutional

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Spokesperson termed the election of Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Prime Minister from the fake incomplete National Assembly without the allocation of the reserved seats for women and minorities as unconstitutional. Reacting over the election of the NA Speaker and Deputy Speaker sans allocation of the reserved seats, PTI Spokesperson stated that the speaker and

Shehbaz felicitates Ayaz Sadiq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister-Designate Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday congratulated Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for winning the election of Speaker National Assembly with a thumping majority.

In a statement, Shehbaz Sharif who is the President Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), said that Ayaz Sadiq has set a unique example of victory as Speaker NA for the third time, adding that he is an experienced and senior politician.

Solangi lauds performance of Parl. Affairs Ministry during caretaker set up

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Friday appreciated the performance and cooperation of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs during the caretaker government's tenure.

This he said while speaking at a farewell ceremony organized in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in his honour.

The minister said with the grace of Allah Almighty, the democratic process was going on in the country.

Murtaza Solangi said he had been reiterating the commitment of the government since the first day that the elections would be held at time schedule given by Election Commission of Pakistan.

Edhi Naval Services team starts rescue operation in Gwadar

QUETTA (APP): The Edhi Naval Services team led by in-charge Dr. Abdul Hakeem Lasi has reached Gwadar on the directive of the Head of Edhi Foundation Faisal Edhi to start a rescue operation in the area.

According to a statement issued here, the recent rains in several areas of Gwadar have caused havoc and several houses have been damaged and people are living there under the open sky.



ISLAMABAD: PML-N Quaid Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif held a meeting with JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman and discuss political situation of country.

Nawaz seeks Maulana Fazl's support for election of PM, President

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Quaid Nawaz Sharif on Friday visited the house of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to seek his support for the election of the prime minister and the President.

The sources claimed Nawaz Sharif invited Maulana Fazlur Rehman to accompany him in the formation of the government and discussed the country's political situation in the meeting.

The sources said that Maulana Fazlur Rehman also voiced certain complaints to Nawaz Sharif during the meeting. The PML-N leadership asked the JUI chief to help into establishing the central government.

Meanwhile, PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif called on Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. During the meeting, they discussed overall political situation in the country.

He also requested Maulana Fazlur Rehman to join the government.

Some seasoned politicians of the PML-N and JUI including Ahsan Iqbal, Ishaq Dar, Rana Sanaullah, Khawaja Saad Rafiq and Maulana Ghafoor Hydari also participated in the meeting.

Apart from this, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali and Noor Alam Khan also attended the meeting.

Senator annoyed over shortage of medicines

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Danesh Kumar of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) on Friday expressed his deep concern over the shortage of medicine at National Institute of Rehabilitation and Medicine (NIRM).

At his calling attention notice at the sixth meeting of the 355th Senate Session here, the Senator said it was the matter of poor masses but the bureaucracy in the the Ministry of National Health, Services, Regulations and Coordination turned its deaf ear to the issue that was pending for the past ten days.

Senator Kumar said the poor people were unable to buy medicines in the prevailing skyrocketing inflation that had crushed the low-income groups of society.



Pakistan Navy Workers during Rescue efforts at flood affected areas of Gwadar.

PML-N, MQM-P reach agreement on coalition govt

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) on Friday signed an agreement to vote for the coalition candidates in the elections for the prime minister and speaker.

PML-N's Ahsan Iqbal and MQM-P's Mustafa signed the agreements after talks between the two parties held at Ishaq Dar's chamber in the National Assembly.

Both parties have signed the agreement carrying the MQM's demands for solution to the problems of Karachi and amendment to the local bodies act. According to the agreement, the constitutional amendment will be the priority of the government.

After reaching the agreement, the MQM will

sit on the government benches and support the PML-N in the elections for the prime minister and speaker.

Talking to the media after signing the agreement, PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal said that both parties had signed the memorandum to empower the people and shift the power to the masses.

"The objective of our agreement is to solve the problems at the doorstep of the people. We will jointly struggle to achieve this objective. We will also try to evolve consensus over this draft the national level," he added.

According to the details of the agreement, local bodies system, Karachi's problems and constitutional amendments will be the party of the agreement.

JUI-F sticks to its guns on not becoming part of govt: Haideri

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) leader Abdul Ghafoor Haideri said on Friday that his party was sticking to its guns on not becoming part of the coalition government.

Speaking exclusively with a private television channel, Haideri said: "Even Nawaz Sharif has not asked the JUI-F to change its narrative. Maulana Fazlur Rehman has addressed his concerns during his meeting with Nawaz Sharif." "The final decision whether to agree with the talks with the PML-N or not will be decided following the

consultations," Haideri said.

Separately, PML-N senior leader Rana Sanaullah said that the country faces severe hardships. Expressing his thoughts, the former interior minister said: "Maulana Fazlur Rehman is not angry at me.

We want to retain the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman. He [Fazlur Rehman] is our leader, as we had difficult times during the tenure of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)." "The meeting was held with Fazlur Rehman in a good way," he added.

Punjab Governor says: Auditor General's Dept vital role in improving transparency, governance

Independent Report
LAHORE: A delegation led by Deputy Auditor General (Central) Tariq Bashir Chatha met Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman here today at Governor House Lahore. During the meeting, the Deputy Auditor General (Central) presented the Accounts and Audit Report of the Punjab Government for the year 2023-24 to the Governor of Punjab. The delegation comprised Director General Audit Punjab, Muhammad Naseem Rashed, Director of Audits, Ikram Haq, Faryal Magsi and Audit Officer (Admin) Syed Nafees Ahmed. Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman, said that the Auditor General's Department has an important role in improving transparency and governance in government departments. He said those departments that are not being audited for any reason should be made part of the audit system. Governor Punjab said that the use of modern technology including management information system is indispensable for increasing the efficiency of the institution. Deputy Auditor General (Central), Tariq Bashir Chatha, told Punjab Governor in detail about the steps taken to improve the institution. He said that Auditor General's organization will review the legal organization requirements and make a strategy to include those departments in the audit system which are not being audited for any reason. He told the Punjab Governor that staff trainings are being conducted in the institution on a regular basis.



Baba Ali Rehman, a retired Naib Qasid of Lahore High Court, award a certificate to a trainee the Federal Judicial Academy.

Four more matches decided in senior Inter-district cricket tourney

KARACHI (APP): Four more matches were decided in the Khansortium Karachi Region Senior Inter District Cricket Tournament at various cricket grounds. The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi. Brilliant centuries by Jehangir Javed 124, Ubais Ullah 124 and Waqar Ahmed 103 were made, a communique said on Friday. Scores in Brief: In the first match of the day at TMC Ground Zone-IV Greens defeated Zone-VII Blues by 5 Wickets. Zone-III Whites 216/6 in allotted 45 overs. Waqar Ahmed 103 3x6 1x6, Hammad Bhatti 41, Rizwan Abbasi 22, Abdur Rehman 20. Muhammad Owais 3/27. Zone-IV Greens 220/5 in 29.2. Overs. Muhammad Maaz 68 9x4, Afnan Khan 54 5x4 3x6, Rameez Shahid 43, Mudasar 27. Afroz Hasan 2/28.

ATC grants bail to 16 accused in Jinnah House attack case

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday granted bail to 16 accused involved in a case of attacking Jinnah House. The court ordered the accused to furnish surety bonds of Rs 100,000 each for availing the relief of bail. ATC Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal heard the post-arrest bail petitions of accused and allowed them on completion of arguments by the parties. Muhammad Danish, Farhan Ahmad, Mukhtar Khan, Saqib Munir, Mian Abdur Rehman, Hassan Ijaz, Yasir Abbas, Muhammad Kashif, Mian Bilal, Suleman Ilyas, Adnan Ashraf, Muhammad Shan, Raheemullah, Hafiz Muhammad Nauman and Muhammad Rayan were included among the accused who were granted bail. The Sarwar Road police had registered a case against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders and workers on charges of attacking Jinnah House.



PESHAWAR: Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahzad Naeem presenting annual Audit Report of 34 Department for the year 2023-24 to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

KPIC, TIP joins hands to promote good governance

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission (KPIC) and Transparency International-Pakistan (TIP) on Friday joined hands to promote good governance. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission (KPIC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Transparency International-Pakistan to extend collaborative efforts in ensuring merit and openness in public affairs performed by public entities. The MoU was signed by Farah Hamid Khan, Chief Information Commissioner KPIC and Kashif Ali Sheikh, Executive Director, TI-Pakistan in presence of other senior officers of the organizations. Under the MoU, both the organizations will collaboratively work in mass awareness regarding Right to Information Act (RTI) and training of Public Information Officers (PIOs) for the smooth flow of public information. Both the institutions look forward to a fruitful partnership that will promote citizen integration into public affairs.

CM seeks report on murder of domestic worker

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken notice of the murder following alleged torture of a domestic worker in Sargodha. She immediately sought a report from the Inspector General of Police regarding the incident. According to the initial report, the accused has been identified, and raids are underway to apprehend him. Maryam Nawaz Sharif emphasized the need for a thorough investigation into the incident and urged that the perpetrator be brought to justice swiftly. She stated that violence of any kind has no place in Punjab.

IGP discusses admin, professional steps about police working

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar chaired a meeting of the police executive board at Central Police Office here on Friday and discussed administrative and professional matters related to working of the police field formations. Senior officers presented suggestions and recommendations regarding administrative and policy issues. In the executive board meeting, various issues including Punjab Mounted Police Force, inclusion of Band Staff in Telecommunication Wing and Welfare initiatives were discussed. The meeting also reviewed progress of various development projects, welfare measures of the force. The IGP ordered that proposals should be finalised and presented in the next meeting for taking a decision. He said the supervisory officers should complete all ongoing projects within the stipulated time under personal supervision.



LAHORE: Deputy Auditor General (Central) Tariq Bashir Chatha presenting the Accounts and Audit Report of the Punjab Government for the year 2023-24 to the Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

'Eat Safe Kids Campaign' launched across Punjab

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority, in collaboration with the Education Department and Special Education Department, Friday launched a province-wide 'Eat Safe Kids Campaign' in private and public schools to promote nutritious eating habits from childhood. In this connection, the inaugural ceremony was organised at the Government Boys High School in Kareem Block and the Government Central High School for the Deaf in Gulberg. The programme was attended by PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid, Secretary School Education Muhammad Ahsan Waheed, Additional Secretary School Saba Adil, Additional Secretary Special Education Khadija-tul-Kubra, Special Education DG Amna Munir and Additional Director Generals of PFA. The 'Eat Safe Kids Campaign' consisted of various interactive activities, workshops, and educational materials to engage children and make learning about healthy eating fun. Children will learn about the importance of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins in their diet.

Diplomats from various countries appreciates business opportunities with Pakistan

KARACHI (APP): Diplomats of Germany, China and Oman while crediting the performance of the caretaker government and security agencies for holding peaceful election, expressed hope that democracy will strengthen in Pakistan, the future of Pakistan is, however, in the hands of the youth. They were talking to journalists at a dinner hosted by prominent businessman and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire Fazal Karim Dadabhy in honor of Dr. Rudiger Lotz, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany at Dadabhy residence and was attended by former caretaker provincial information minister Ahmed Shah, Mohammad Iqbal Memon, Home Secretary.

3 injured in jubilant firing, 2 held after CPO notice

FAISALABAD (APP): Three people including two minor children sustained multiple injuries due to jubilant firing while the police arrested two accused after the City Police Officer (CPO) took notice. A police spokesman said here on Friday that Muhammad Iqbal of Jameel Town, Ghulam Muhammad Abad, 5-year-old Ibrahim of Tariq Town, Korianwala.

International News

More than 100 killed while seeking aid in Gaza, overall death toll passes 30,000

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Gaza health authorities said Israeli forces on Thursday (Feb 29) shot dead more than 100 Palestinians as they waited for an aid delivery, but Israel blamed the deaths on crowds that surrounded aid trucks, saying victims had been trampled or run over. At least 112 people were killed and more than 280 wounded in the incident near Gaza City, Palestinian health officials said. The loss of civilian lives was the biggest in weeks. Hamas said the trucks were operated by private contractors as part of an aid operation that it had been overseeing for the past four nights. One Israeli official said there had been two incidents, hundreds of metres apart, in the first of which dozens were killed or injured as they tried to take aid from the trucks and were trampled or run over. He said there was a second, subsequent incident as the trucks moved off. Some people in the crowd approached troops who felt under threat and opened fire, killing an unknown number in a "limited response", he said. He dismissed the casualty toll given by Gaza authorities but gave no figure himself. In a later briefing, Israel Defense Forces spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari also said dozens had been trampled to death or injured in a fight to take supplies off the trucks.



Palestinians transport casualties following Israeli fire on people waiting for aid in Gaza City.

Five countries pledge personnel for Haiti security mission, UN says

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin and Chad have formally notified the United Nations of their intent to contribute personnel to an international force to help Haitian national police fight armed gangs, a UN spokesman said on Thursday. Contributions of \$10.8 million have also been deposited into a trust fund to support the multinational security support mission, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters, adding that further pledges of \$78 million had also been made. The United Nations Security Council authorised in October a foreign security mission to Haiti, a year after the Caribbean country asked for help to fight violent gangs that have largely overrun its capital Port-au-Prince. The 15-member council's resolution requires countries to inform UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of their participation in the security mission. While approved by the Security Council, the mission is not a UN operation. The response to Haiti's request for help was delayed due to a struggle to find a country willing to lead a security assistance mission.

Russia ready to hand over crash victims' bodies to Ukraine, RIA says

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia is ready to hand over to Ukraine the bodies of the victims of a January military plane crash, the RIA news agency cited Russian human rights official Tatyana Moskalkova as saying on Friday. Moscow accuses Kyiv of downing the Il-76 plane in Russia's Belgorod region and killing 74 people on board, including 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers en route to be swapped for Russian prisoners of war. It has not presented evidence.

Bangladesh building fire kills 46, injures dozens

Monitoring Desk
DHAKA: A massive fire in Bangladesh that raged through a six-storey building home to restaurants where many families with children were dining has killed at least 46 people and injured dozens, the health minister said on Friday. Fire authorities said a gas leak or a stove could have caused Thursday's blaze in the capital, which spread quickly after breaking out in a biryani restaurant, and was only brought under control following two hours of effort by 13 units of firefighters. Hospitals were treating 22 people with burns, Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen told reporters. "All 22 people [...] are in critical condition," Sen, himself a well-known physician, said after a visit to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. "We are trying our best to save their lives," he said. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed shock and sorrow at the incident, ordering swift treatment for the injured. She urged adherence to construction rules and regulations, including requirements for essential safety features such as fire exits and ventilation systems to prevent such tragedies in the future. One survivor, Mohammad Altaf, recounted his narrow escape from the blaze that killed two colleagues. "I went to the kitchen, broke a window and jumped to save myself," he told reporters, adding that a cashier and server who urged people to leave during the first moments had died later.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte attend a ceremony of signing an agreement on security cooperation and long-term support between Ukraine and Netherlands, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

US Supreme Court to hear Trump's immunity claim

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court agreed on Wednesday to hear Donald Trump's claim that as a former president he is immune from prosecution, further delaying his trial on charges of conspiring to overturn the 2020 election. Trump had been scheduled to go on trial in Washington on March 4, but the nation's highest court scheduled arguments in the high-stakes case for the week of April 22 and said Trump's federal election interference trial would remain on hold for now. On the same day, a judge in the state of Illinois ordered the former president stricken off the state's primary ballot for his role in the January 6 Capitol riot. Today, both Trump and incumbent President Joe Biden are due to pay dueling visits to the US-Mexico border Thursday as they try to win over voters on immigration.

Bangladeshi leader says a shopping mall that caught fire had no emergency exits

Monitoring Desk
DHAKA: A six-story shopping mall that caught fire in the Bangladeshi capital had no fire exits, the country's prime minister said Friday, as the death toll climbed to at least 46 and rescuers continued to search for more victims. The fire started late Thursday in a restaurant on the first floor of the Green Cozy Cottage Shopping Mall in downtown Dhaka. More than a dozen firefighting units were deployed. Firefighters rescued survivors and pulled out bodies, and by early Friday, at least 43 people were confirmed dead.

Three shot dead at US dental clinic

CALIFORNIA (INP): A manhunt was launched by police in the California city of El Cajon on Thursday after a shooting at a dentist's office left one dead and two injured, local media reported. Police in the town, about 20 miles (30 kilometers) outside of San Diego, said on social media they were searching for an "armed and dangerous" 29-year-old suspect who fled the scene after the attack.

South Korea's Yoon says better Japan ties helping deter North Korea threat

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said on Friday improved ties with Japan were helping to combat threats from Pyongyang's weapons developments and called for help from the international community to bring about unification with North Korea. Under Yoon's conservative administration, Seoul has sought better ties with Tokyo which have been fraught with historical baggage for years at a time of China's growing influence and North Korea's growing missile and nuclear programs. During a ceremony to mark an independence holiday, Yoon said next year would be the 60th anniversary of normalised diplomatic relations with Japan and he hoped it could be a chance for the bilateral relationship to reach a "higher level". "Now, South Korea and Japan are working together to overcome the painful past and moving toward a 'new world,'" he said in a speech to commemorate the formation of an independence movement against Japan's 1910-1945 occupation of Korea. "The security cooperation between the two countries against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats has been strengthened further," he added. During his speech, Yoon said that Seoul would need international help for any prospect of unification with North Korea. "Unification is a challenging task that we cannot accomplish alone. The international community must pool its strength in a responsible manner," he said. Yoon's comments come after the North's leader Kim Jong Un in January called South Korea a "primary foe" and said unification was no longer possible.

President for enhanced cooperation between audit institutions of Pakistan, Azerbaijan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday called for increasing cooperation between the supreme audit institutions of Pakistan and Azerbaijan for sharing best auditing practices to enhance transparency and financial accountability.

The president, talking to the visiting Chairman of the Chamber of Accounts of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Vugar Gulmammadov who called on him, said that public sector accounting was a critical component of financial management within government organizations that helped ensure transparency and accountability in government spending. Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), Muhammad Ajmal Gondal and officials of AGP also attended the meeting, a President House press release said.

Chairman of the Chamber of Accounts of

Azerbaijan (CAA), Vugar Gulmammadov, briefed the president about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Supreme Audit Institution of Azerbaijan, CAA, and the Supreme Audit Institution of Pakistan, AGP, for peer reviews of public accounts. He said that the MoU would help deepen friendly relations between the two countries.

The president lauded the signing of the MoU between AGP and CAA, adding that it would increase cooperation between two countries in the field of Public Sector Auditing.

He added that cooperation between CAA and AGP would be mutually beneficial for both the countries.

He also appreciated AGP's role in carrying out peer reviews of the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) of Azerbaijan.

Talking to the delega-



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Chamber of Accounts of Azerbaijan, Vugar Gulmammadov, along with his delegation called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

SAPM inaugurates the first-ever protectorate to promote legal migration

ISLAMABAD (Online): In a momentous occasion that signifies Pakistan's commitment to promoting safe and legal migration, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Jawad Sohrab Malik inaugurated the first-ever Protectorate of Emigrants Office here Friday.

This initiative not only underscores the government's dedication to ensuring the welfare of its citizens seeking employ-

ment abroad but also positions Islamabad as a focal point for international collaboration on labor and migration issues. The inauguration of the Islamabad Protectorate Office, closely following the recent opening of two protectorate offices in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), in Bagh and Rawalakot, further amplifies the government's efforts in streamlining migration services across the country.

These steps are reflective of the Ministry of Overseas

Pakistanis and Human Resource Development's ongoing mission to facilitate the journey of Pakistani workers abroad, ensuring their rights and well-being are prioritized at every stage.

During the ceremony, the SAPM highlighted the strategic importance of establishing the Protectorate in Islamabad, a city that hosts numerous international organizations, including labor and migration entities as well as foreign embassies.

DG stresses Civil-defense awareness, culture training to manage natural calamities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of Civil Defense Niaz Muhammad Khan Friday stressed media for creating more awareness among the people about Civil Defense and to prepare volunteers and students who can help in case of any natural calamities.

In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, on eve of World Defense Day highlight the achievements of national disaster prevention services and to raise awareness about importance of self-defense.

Civil defense training is a must for every man and woman, he said, adding, in

order to save their own lives and the lives of others. Civil Defense is the best organization for the service of the people, he said, adding, our volunteer training programs are free of cost where interested citizens specially youth can actively participate.

He demanded of the provincial and center government for equipping the volunteers with the needed facilities so they could perform their tasks more efficiently. Civil Defense staff and volunteers can take part in firefighting and first aid programs, he mentioned.

PTI wants to derail democracy: Atta Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Attaullah Tarar of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz alleged on Friday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's leadership wanted to derail democracy in the country.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, he claimed that the PTI leadership had targeted defense institutions on May 9.

He further asserted that in 2018, the PTI government came into power through rigging.

Tarar also congratulated the newly elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.



ISLAMABAD: To Takeshi, Charge d' Affaires Embassy of Japan in Pakistan, together with Neveen Syed, Director Sogetsu Ikebana Study Group, viewing Japanese Ikebana exhibition titled "Mughal Architecture Through the eyes of Sogetsu Ikebana".

COMSTECH, Huawei join hands to elevate cybersecurity proficiency of OIC nations

ISLAMABAD (APP): COMSTECH and Huawei have joined hands to elevate the cybersecurity proficiency of OIC nations, focusing on areas like security management, security incident response, vulnerability management, and staying abreast of emerging security technologies and requirements.

This partnership is reiterated during the high level meetings held at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, said a message received here.

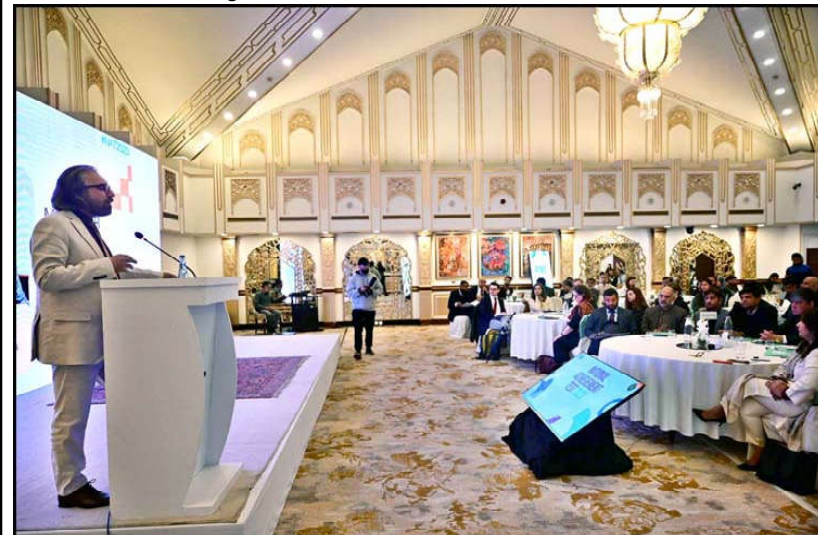
Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and Advisor COMSTECH, Dr. Syed Khurshid Hainan met with the Cyber security and Privacy Protection team at the Mobile World Congress to chart out the future of the strategic collaboration.

COMSTECH, the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation

of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Huawei Technologies Pakistan recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to bolster national cybersecurity awareness and fortify the capabilities of OIC member states in cybersecurity.

COMSTECH's core mandate revolves around fostering cooperation among OIC Member States in science and technology. It aims to bolster capabilities through training in emerging areas, implementing OIC resolutions, and developing programs to enhance scientific capabilities for socio-economic development and rapid industrialization.

Set against the background of an increasingly interconnected world, securing systems and data has never been more crucial, as has the development of regulations, policies and capacity to manage the



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary (MoFEPT) Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry addressing during the launching ceremony of National Achievement Test 2023 Assessing the Learning Environment organized by Pakistan Institute of Education.

Wet weather to continue; authorities on alert to avert damages

ISLAMABAD (APP): Heavy rain, with heavy snowfall over the hilly areas, lashed most parts of the country including the federal capital, as per forecast of weather experts, and continued since Thursday night with occasional gaps, turning the weather cold.

The heavy rainfall has not only suspended the daily life in various parts of the country especially in Sindh and Balochistan provinces but also causing inconvenience to the travelers.

In the federal capital, the rain of moderate to heavy intensity started during the midnight and continued till present (4:00 pm) with gaps. Considering the intensity of rainfall during this spell, the authorities have declared rain emergency in rain-hit areas of Sindh and Balochistan to avert mishaps.

The heavy rain has compelled citizens to remain indoors and wear warm clothes due to the lowering temperature while many are enjoying the popular winter delights including Doodh Jalebi, Gajar ka Halwa, chicken corn soup, Kashmiri tea, dry fruits, fried fish, samosas, pakoras and other traditional winter foods.

Huge rush of buyers especially women was also witnessed at the stalls of second-hand clothes stalls and flea markets on Friday who were purchasing warm clothes for them and children.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), torrential rainfall and heavy snowfall with windstorm, thunderstorms and isolated hailstorm was expected in most parts of the country till March 02.

Court orders for medical examination of journalist

ISLAMABAD (APP): A local court on Friday ordered for medical examination of Journalist Asad Ali Toor, who was currently in custody of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

Judicial Magistrate, Muhammad Shabbir heard the application seeking medical examination of the said journalist.

The petitioner's lawyer adopted the stance that his client was observing hunger strike in custody of the FIA and prayed the court to shift him to the hospital.

However, the FIA officials informed the court that the petitioner was healthy and not having any sort of strike.

PDMA predicts snowfall, rain in Murree, Galiyat

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has predicted heavy snowfall and rain in Murree and Galiyat over the next few days, said its Director General Imran Qureshi.

Talking to a private news channel, Qureshi urged the local administration to ensure safety measures to mitigate any potential risks.

DG PDMA further appealed to tourists to cooperate with the administration during this time.



ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Prof Farhat Mujtaba awarding winning trophy of English Drama competition to students held at Margalla College F-7/4.

Notorious dacoit gang busted; booty of Rs 4.8 mn recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police Anti Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) police team arrested three wanted members of a notorious dacoit gang involved in numerous activities and recovered cash, batteries and truck worth Rs 4.8 million from their possession.

The police team also recovered cash, batteries and a truck worth Rs 4.8 million from their possession. The cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

Senior police officers directed the police officials for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and ensured the safety of lives and property of citizens on priority basis.

The citizens are urged to cooperate with the police and report any suspicious individuals or activities through the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or at "ICT-15" mobile application.

CDA, PITB sign agreement for digitisation of official record

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) Friday signed an agreement to digitise all office working of the authority.

Under the agreement, a modern property management system will be introduced to computerise the property record of the citizens. According to the details, the e-office will be established as per the agreement between the Capital Development Authority and PITB. In order to ensure transparency in all information related to the property, it is possible to get rid of record tampering, including record missing or record leaking and the land or property record can also be saved in a modern way, an official of the CDA said.

"Besides, the aim of this initiative is to empower the Capital Development Authority (CDA) by equipping it with modern tools and technology in the realm of 'smart governance', the official said.

He said that by using the latest tools, the Capital Development Authority aims to enhance its decision-making process and ultimately achieve e-empowerment for the authority so that all citizens and applicants can be facilitated for speedy processing of their allotment.



ISLAMABAD: Lady Health Workers on the way under cover of umbrella to protect from rain while visiting home to home to administer polio drops to children at Tarlahi during anti polio campaign.

Saudi embassy, PBM join hands for Ramadan ration distribution, orphan care

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Saudi Embassy on Friday agreed to collaborate with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) to distribute ration bags during Ramadan ul Mubarak and take responsibility for the care of 100 orphans supported by Pakistan Sweet Home, with formal documentation to follow soon.

Managing Director of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Syed Tariq Mahmood Al-Hassan, visited the Saudi Embassy in Islamabad upon a special invitation from the Saudi Ambassador, Nawaf Al-Maliki.

The Saudi Ambassador warmly welcomed him during the visit. He congratulated Syed Tariq Mahmood Al-Hassan on assuming the position of Managing Director of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal.

In the meeting, the Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal and the Saudi Ambassador reached an agreement to collaborate on initiatives within Pakistan's social sectors. The Saudi Ambassador assured the Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal of seeking further cooperation for additional social projects in the coun-

try.

Previously, Saudi relief agencies and other social organizations from Saudi Arabia have collaborated with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal on numerous projects aimed at the welfare of the needy and vulnerable individuals. The Saudi Embassy in Islamabad has consistently maintained positive and fruitful cooperation with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal.

The Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal recognized the Saudi Arabian government's particular focus on global social sectors. He highlighted the enduring support between the two brotherly nations during challenging periods, emphasizing Saudi Arabia's continued prioritization of Pakistan's economy and social well-being. This commitment underscores the mutual trust shared between the two countries.

The Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal acknowledged Saudi Arabia's keen interest in global social sectors. He emphasized the enduring support and prioritization of Pakistan's economy and social welfare by the two nations, reflecting mutual trust.



ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Syed Tariq Mahmood-Ul-Hassan exchanging views with H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al Maliki Saudi Arabia Ambassador in Pakistan.

Pakistan growing startup ecosystem driving innovation, entrepreneurship: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan in Czech Republic Ayesha Ali has said that Pakistan's growing startup ecosystem was driving innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in areas of e-commerce, fintech, and health technology.

The ambassador, in her address at a webinar on "IT Landscape of Pakistan" said that Pakistan was known for its vibrant IT outsourcing industry, offering cost-effective solutions in software development, digital marketing, and customer support, said a press release received on Friday.

The webinar was organized by the Embassy of Pakistan in Prague in collaboration with Czech Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Code District, a Lahore-based private software house, and attended by more than 50 companies, both from Pakistan and the Czech Republic.

The ambassador said that Pakistan had become a preferred destination for IT

outsourcing services.

Ambassador Ayesha said that on the other hand, the Czech Republic was renowned for its advanced IT infrastructure, research and development capabilities, and expertise in areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and data analytics.

By leveraging their respective strengths, Pakistan and the Czech Republic can explore opportunities for collaboration in several key areas, the envoy emphasized. On behalf of software houses from Pakistan, a presentation highlighting product and service range being offered to outsiders was given by CEO Code District, Ashar Samdani.

From the Czech side, presentations were delivered by Miroslav Hazer, Director External Relations, Czech Confederation of Industries, Eva Rybkova, Chairperson of Czech Pakistan Business Council at the Czech Chambers of Commerce and Ahsan Aslam, Czech - Pakistan Chambers of Commerce.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Belgium to Pakistan Charles Delogne and wife of French Ambassador Camelia Galey look at a photograph during photographic exhibition of Ferrante Ferranti at the Embassy of France, in the Federal Capital.

Ex-Ambassador highlights growing ties between Brazil, Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Ambassador Pedro Luis Rodriguez highlighted the growing relationship between Brazil and Pakistan, emphasizing significant strides made in fostering cooperation despite geographical distance.

In a special interview with PTV on Friday, he acknowledged the proactive measures taken by the Pakistani Embassy in Brazil, with both countries eager to explore various avenues of collaboration.

He praised the efforts of the Pakistan Embassy in Brazil for their role in bridging the gap between the business communities of Brazil and Pakistan.

Rodriguez underscored Brazil's expertise in agriculture and live-

stock industries, noting a recent mission from Pakistan to procure cattle breeds tracing their lineage back to the region. Brazil's historical experience with food scarcity and subsequent technological advancements in agriculture reflects Brazil's willingness to share its expertise with Pakistan to bolster food security efforts.

Rodriguez emphasized the importance of leveraging technology and expertise to meet the food needs of growing populations, both domestically and through exports. Being the representative of Compo Brasil Fertilizantes Ltd. (Brazil), he said that he was in discussions with Fongrow Corporate Farming aimed at exploring opportunities for collaboration.