

Independent

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Visits residence of martyrs' family, pays tribute PM vows to completely eradicate menace of terrorism

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Monday visited the residence of Captain Ahmed Badr Shaheed who embraced martyrdom while gallantly fighting the terrorists in district North Waziristan of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The prime minister while expressing his sympathies with the bereaved family said that he was very impressed by their patience and determination. He said the whole nation was proud of the sacrifice, Captain Ahmed has rendered for the cause of the country.

Interacting with the local elders on the occasion, Premier Shehbaz Sharif said these martyrs were the pride of the nation and the entire nation was indebted to their sacrifices.

He reaffirmed the national resolve to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country and said the sacrifices of our martyrs will not go in vain.

The prime minister especially acknowledged with pride, the courage and patience of Shaheed

Captain Ahmed's parents.

He announced to establish a school in the area which will be named after the Shaheed Captain as per the desire of his father.

Earlier, the prime minister also visited the residence of Lt. Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed in Rawalpindi and offered his heartfelt condolence to the family.

He prayed to Allah Almighty to grant eternal peace to the martyrs and patience to the bereaved families to bear the loss with courage. He said the brave jawans and officers of Pakistan Army had sacrificed their lives to safeguard their motherland.

PM Shehbaz further said that the entire nation including himself pay tributes to them. "The families of martyrs are a matter of pride for the entire nation", he remarked.

The prime minister said the entire nation stood shoulder to shoulder with its armed forces till complete eradication of the menace of terrorism.



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif offers condolences to the family of Lt. Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed at their residence in Chaklala.

Pakistan carries out operation inside Afghanistan to target terrorist sanctuaries

Target of operation was Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group militants; Pakistan has repeatedly conveyed serious concerns to Afghan govt; Islamabad urges Afghan govt on effective action against terrorists.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Monday carried out intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations in the border regions inside Afghanistan.

In a statement, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said the target of today's operation was the terrorist outfits including TTP inside Afghanistan. These terrorists pose a grave threat to Pakistan's security and have consistently used Afghan territory to launch terror attacks inside Pakistani territory.

The latest attack took place on 16 March 2024 at a security post in Mir Ali in North Waziristan and claimed the lives of seven Pakistani soldiers.

Over the past two years, she said Pakistan has repeatedly conveyed its serious concerns to the Interim Afghan Government over the presence of terror outfits including TTP inside Afghanistan. These terrorists pose a grave threat to Pakistan's security and have consistently used Afghan territory to launch terror attacks inside Pakistani territory.

Pakistan has also called on them to deny safe havens to TTP and to hand over its leadership to Pakistan.

The Spokesperson said Pakistan has great respect for the people of Afghanistan. However, certain elements among those in power in Afghanistan are actively patronising TTP and using them as a proxy against Pakistan.

"Such an approach against a brotherly country, which stood with the people of Afghanistan through thick and thin, manifests shortsightedness. It ignores the support extended by Pakistan to the people of Afghanistan over several decades."

She said, "We urge these elements in power to

rethink the policy of siding with Khwarij terrorists shedding the blood of innocent Pakistanis and to make a clear choice to stand with the people of Pakistan."

"Terrorist groups like TTP are a collective threat to regional peace and security. We fully realize the challenge Afghan authorities face in combating the threat posed by TTP. Pakistan would therefore continue to work towards finding joint solutions in countering terrorism and to prevent any terrorist organization from sabotaging bilateral relations with Afghanistan," she added.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan, Donald Blome, calls on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President for enhanced trade, investment ties with US

Pakistan's prosperity, security top priority of US: Ambassador Blome

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has underlined the need to enhance trade and investment relations with the United States of America, besides exploring collaborative opportunities in diverse sectors. He said that American enterprises should be encouraged to invest in the Pakistan Stock Exchange as well as bring innovative business ideas to the country's economy. The president made these remarks while talking to Ambassador of the USA to Pakistan Donald Blome who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the president said that Pakistan had enjoyed a long-standing and broad-based relationship with the USA spanning

over seven decades, which needed to be further strengthened.

He said that top priority of Pakistan was to put its economy on the right track and overcome economic and security challenges. He highlighted that climate change was a global issue, and Pakistan was among the countries most vulnerable to its adverse impacts. He said that Pakistan wanted to improve its agricultural sector by adopting modern irrigation techniques to conserve water and reduce reliance on flood irrigation. An Ambassador Donald Blome said that Pakistan and the USA could enhance bilateral collaboration in the fields of trade & investment, climate change, renewable energy, agriculture and security.

PM felicitates President Putin on his re-election

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday congratulated President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on his re-election.

On his X account the prime minister further posted that he looked forward to working with him (President Putin) to further strengthen Pakistan-Russian relations.

PTI to launch protest movement across country

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to launch a countrywide protest movement.

PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat, talking to the media outside the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House, said three important decisions were taken by the core committee meeting.

The core committee has decided to launch a strong protest movement in the center and the provinces.

Marwat said the first meeting would be held in Islamabad on March 30.

"My statement was played wrongly on TV. We have no differences," he said, adding that the members of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would appear in the court during the hearing of the cases of the PTI founder.

Elder brother of former DG ISI Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed arrested

RAWALPINDI (Online): Najaf Hameed, elder brother of former DG ISI Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed has been arrested on corruption charges. Anti corruption arrested Najaf Hameed from Rawalpindi court.

Najaf Hameed was wanted by anti corruption in a case. Najaf Hameed had got bail before arrest. The court rejected the bail before arrest and later Najaf Hameed escaped from the court. However police chased him and arrested him again.

X already banned when new govt took over: Information Minister Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Monday acknowledged that social media platform X was already banned when the new government took over the reins from the caretaker setup, saying there was no official notification for the clampdown.

Access to X has been disrupted in many areas of Pakistan since February 17, when former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Chatha accused the chief election commissioner and chief justice of Pakistan of being involved in rigging the February 8 general elections. Similar disruptions were also observed during the general elections.

The information minister had himself pushed back last week against the disruption and claimed X was still working, calling on those questioning otherwise to present a notification for the ban.

However, in an interview today with media platform World Echo News, Tarar contrasted his own statement, saying: "Twitter was already banned when we came into government. There is no official notification for it but obviously, everyone can see that its signal and frequency are not working as normal and it is being used through virtual private networks. This is correct." The information minister suggested that there should be a charter on "dos and don'ts of the red lines that should not be crossed", adding that political parties should discuss issues such as misogynistic abuse of women, cursing and mockery of martyrs, etc

China to continue to be main driver of global economic development: Ambassador

BEIJING (APP): While commenting on China's economic growth target of 5% proposed for this year, Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi said that this makes it clear that China will continue to be the main driver of global economic development, main trading partner of most countries in the world, and an important source of stability, peace and prosperity.

China's growth will drive the growth of the rest of the world. For example,

the miracle of China's electric vehicles has promoted the development of renewable energy and had a great impact on the rest of the world, he said in an interview with Beijing Daily.

Hashmi, who assumed as Pakistan's ambassador in China in November last year, was invited to listen to China's Two Sessions for the first time. He said that the Two Sessions are an important embodiment of China's democratic practice and attract attention at home and abroad.



BEIJING: Ambassador of Pakistan to China, Khalil Hashmi and Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, Sun Weidong cutting the cake in celebration of Pakistan National Day reception organised by Pakistan Embassy.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Quaid Muslim League-Nawaz Muhammad Nawaz Sharif chairing a meeting about transport

SC orders re-election in PB-50

ISLAMABAD (INP): Supreme Court (SC) on Monday ordered to hold re-election in PB-50 Qalaabullah, Balochistan. As per details, the top court heard the plea filed by Zamrik Khan, challenging the ECP order.

At the outset of the hearing, Supreme Court annulled the Election Commission of Pakistan's recount order in PB-50 Balochistan. The top court also directed the ECP to ensure transparent election as per the constitution of Pakistan.

Federal Interior Minister visits Quaid's mausoleum

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi on Monday visited the mausoleum of father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and paid rich tributes to him.

The Minister laid a wreath and offered fateha at the mausoleum. He also prayed for the development and prosperity of the country.

Later, he inked his impressions in the visitors' book.

Six killed in roof collapse in S. Waziristan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): At least six people of a family were killed and others injured when the roof of a house collapsed in Barmal Tehsil of South Waziristan, Lower. According to reports quoting rescue sources, the incident occurred in the Raghza area of Barmal Tehsil, when members of the family present in the room after Iftar.

CM Punjab approves metro bus projects in three cities

Independent Report LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved the decision in principle to start the metro bus project in three cities of Punjab.

She gave this approval while chairing a meeting with Quaid Muslim League-Nawaz Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, in Lahore on Monday.

The meeting reviewed the transport sector projects in Lahore. The Chief Minister also sought the plan for an underground train project in Lahore.

No dialogue with Govt sans release of PTI leaders: Umar

ISLAMABAD (INP): PTI leader Umar Ayub said that as long as PTI leaders were not released, there will be no dialogue with the government.

He claimed that Shehbaz-led government has no knowledge of the economy therefore there was no use to discuss economic challenges with him.

He said Shehbaz led government destroyed the economy in the past and this time they will do the same. Meanwhile, the anti-terrorism court in Lahore granted interim bail to Umar Ayub Khan in five cases till April 20.

Terrorist Commander Sehra among eight others killed in N Waziristan

RAWALPINDI (APP): The security forces have killed a high value target identified as terrorist commander Sehra alias Janan among the eight other terrorists during an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO) conducted on the night of March 17 and 18th in North Waziristan District.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, after an intense fire exchange, eight terrorists including Terrorist commander Sehra alias



KARACHI: The Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi offering Fateha at the mausoleum of father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah during his first visit to the city.

Jam Kamal concerned about slow pace of work on construction of Bela-Jhao-Awaran road

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Commerce and Trade, Jam Kamal Khan has expressed deep concern over the slow pace of work on the construction of Bela-Jhao-Awaran road.

In this regard, Jam Kamal contacted the Chairman, National Highway Authority (NHA), Arshad Majeed Mehmood and discussed with him the matter about expediting work on the road.

While diverting the attention of Chairman NHA towards the important project, the Federal Min-

ister for Commerce and Trade pointed out that the people are facing hardships due to the dilapidated condition of road.

Jam Kamal directed the NHA chairman to expedite pace of work on the construction of road in view of the public issues.

On this, Chairman NHA assured to expedite pace of work on the road project.

He said that the concerned high ups are being issued necessary directives in this regard so as to complete the project at the earliest and public miseries may be alleviated.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

One crucial year of extraordinary achievements

Undoubtedly it was an extraordinary year of extraordinary achievements made by an extraordinary person. He is no other but the Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir who completed one year as the COAS recently. General Syed Asim Munir had taken command as COAS on November 29, 2022 at the times when Pakistan was really facing numbers of challenges, economic crisis, poor law and order condition and also the political instability. When we talk about the achievements during a period of just one year as Army Chief there are some of the most important goals and success which Pakistan achieve due to the efforts of General Asim Munir. During this year, under his leadership, the Pakistani armed forces and affiliated institutions tirelessly worked to make the country successful on every front. When General Asim Munir assumed command, the country was politically and economically vulnerable. There were fears that it might default in few days, leading to upheaval in the military. Things got to a point where rumors began to circulate about Pakistan's nuclear assets falling into the wrong hands. All in all, the entire country was gripped by a strong grip of panic and uncertainty. It was during those days that General Asim Munir stepped to the front with a determined resolve. The tenacity with which he steered the military towards pulling the country out of these challenges should be appreciated. He initiated steps to improve the economic and military aspects of Pakistan all the while focusing on a vision that aimed at the betterment of the nation.

Taking command during a crucial time, he recognized the necessity of the IMF program for the country. General Asim Munir engaged with strategic allies like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, ensuring them of credible progress during their diplomatic visits and managed to secure a \$3 billion deposit. This Saudi and Emirati injection of confidence, in turn, paved the way for Pakistan to enter the IMF program. Following this, a special Investment Council was established, based on General Asim Munir's vision, aiming to provide protection for investments within the country. As per the vision, this could only be achieved if all obstacles hindering economic stability were removed and steps taken to control inflation. General Asim Munir's personal efforts within the business community instilled confidence in the nation's progress. The Investment Council's long-term program for foreign investment includes the significant involvement of the COAS. Saudi Arabia acknowledged the success of General Asim Munir's efforts, pledging a \$25 billion fund solely for Pakistan. The UAE is also working on a \$20 to \$22 billion investment program. Meanwhile, chatter on the street celebrated that China's investment in Pakistan is evident. After General Asim Munir took charge, he revived projects under the CPEC. Some questioned the inclusion of the Army Chief in the Investment Council, but it should be remembered that going beyond its traditional role, the Pakistani military has played a crucial hand in bringing foreign investment, especially in projects requiring security clearance.

The military's support is vital for investment, and General Asim Munir's inclusion in this forum has provided credibility. Pakistan's deep-rooted relations with these countries and past experiences demonstrate that the military has played a significant role in enhancing ties when civilian leadership fell short.

Honoring Leadership: The worldwide response to Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's victory

By Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

In a heartening display of international camaraderie, foreign dignitaries from across the globe have extended warm congratulations to Pakistan's newly elected Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. Sadiq's victory has not only resonated within the political corridors of Pakistan but has also garnered attention and felicitations from leaders worldwide.

The diplomatic community has lauded Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's ascendancy to the esteemed position of Speaker, recognizing his rich experience and unwavering commitment to democratic principles. From capitals in Europe to Asia and beyond, messages of support and goodwill have poured in, underlining the significance of Pakistan's democratic process on the global stage. The outpouring of congratulatory messages underscores the profound significance of Pakistan's



democratic institutions and the pivotal role they play on the global stage.

Among the distinguished well-wishers are prominent figures such as the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, the Speaker of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as representatives from United States, Iran, Iraq, the World Bank, Turkey, UAE, Syria, Yemen, Morocco, and numerous other countries.

In a statement, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National

People's Congress of China expressed confidence in the continued strengthening of bilateral relations between China and Pakistan under Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's leadership. The Speaker of the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan conveyed her heartfelt congratulations, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and mutual understanding in fostering regional stability and prosperity.

Speaking on behalf of the United States, US Ambassador commended Pakistan's democratic journey and expressed confidence in Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's ability to lead the

National Assembly with integrity and dedication. The European Union emphasized the importance of strengthening parliamentary institutions for sustainable democratic governance and pledged continued cooperation with Pakistan under Sadiq's leadership.

Türkiye, a steadfast ally of Pakistan, reaffirmed its unwavering support for the strengthening of bilateral ties and cooperation in various fields. The United Arab Emirates, a key economic partner in the region, expressed optimism for enhanced collaboration under Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's stewardship, emphasizing the importance of strategic partnerships in driving progress and prosperity.

From the Middle East to North Africa, messages of felicitations have dispensed in, highlighting the esteemed reputation and leadership qualities of Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. Representatives from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Morocco extended their

sincere wishes for a successful tenure, echoing sentiments of solidarity and cooperation in addressing shared challenges and advancing common interests.

The World Bank, an institution committed to global development and poverty alleviation, commended Pakistan's commitment to democratic principles and the peaceful transition of power. The congratulatory message underscored the importance of strong parliamentary leadership in advancing sustainable development goals and ensuring inclusive governance.

The felicitations extended beyond political boundaries, with international organizations such as the United Nations, International Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Secretariat acknowledging Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on his election.

These organizations reiterated their support for Pakistan's democratic journey and pledged assistance in addressing common chal-

enges, including socio-economic development and human rights.

As Pakistan embarks on a new chapter under the leadership of Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, these messages of goodwill from esteemed international counterparts serve as a testament to the country's growing stature on the global stage. They reinforce the significance of upholding democratic values, fostering diplomatic relations, and working collectively towards a more peaceful and prosperous world.

In response to the overwhelming support, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq expressed his gratitude to all well-wishers, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to promoting peace, stability, and cooperation on the international front. He reiterated his dedication to serving the people of Pakistan with integrity, diligence, and a steadfast commitment to the principles of democracy.

The writer is Researcher at National Assembly of Pakistan

Doddering doyens

Must have appeared a long haul to a 66-year-old novice, his '22 years of struggle' notwithstanding. Imagine his earnestness to lead 200 million-plus Pakistanis, lest they be made to wait till 2029, when the next general elections are due. He will be 76 then. All the treadmill and burpees in the world would not make him a credible choice for the 15- to 20-year reign that he said is required to turn Pakistan around.

Imran is not alone in this predicament. Nawaz is 74. This explains his fervour to oust the PTI government with the establishment's support through a vote of no-confidence in April 2022. He and his party knew full well what havoc the interregnum would wreak on their political capital. The economic reforms that were continuously sacrificed at the altar of populism will now have to be undertaken

behind the fig leaf of an IMF programme. The establishment, too, had no choice but to 'see to it' that a beaten-into-submission, non-PTI coalition wins the 2024 elections, as any deviation from the Fund programme would mean that the loan lifeline, now imperative even for paying defence salaries, is withdrawn.

Once lured away from his defiant voteko izzat do (honour the ballot) stance, and in light of the establishment's hard-line stance towards Afghanistan, Iran and India, as indicated by the army chief's address to students in Islamabad, the elder Sharif had no option but to step aside to make way for his younger sibling's ride to the Prime Minister's Office.

PM Shehbaz Sharif is known more for his energy and hands-on administration than being a visionary ready to challenge the security paradigm. His as-

signed role has always been that of a go-between for the House of Sharif and Army House. He can be counted upon to undertake the bare minimum structural reforms to keep international lenders from turning off the taps. However, even some reforms and the stability they afford would be better than what the PTI did to itself and the country. The PTI had promised a team of economic wizards in the run-up to the 2018 polls. They never materialised and led to its leader's desperate stance 'I will commit suicide before going to the IMF'.

Mr Modi, who seems all set to win another stint in office this year, is spearheading an election campaign that his party men are not loath to term as a bid for the 2029 polls; he will be 78 at the end of his third consecutive stay at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, the official residence of the prime min-

ister in Delhi. The Modi-led BJP is said to have a rule of retiring its leaders at 75; however, its latest move to award the party ticket to Hema Malini, 75, to contest a Lok Sabha seat from Mathura, can signal the beginning of an era where popularity trumps all other considerations. At least the 'extension' here is for staying in the fray, and not in office.

Nawaz Sharif, the proponent of regional integration and normalising Pak-istan-India relations, will be 79 if he has to wait till he can take another stab at policymaking in 2029. At the end of that term, he will be 84. In other words, all aspirations to take Pakistan in a new direction are personality-driven. The forces insisting on keeping us bogged down in the morass of a security state mindset have institutional backing behind them.

Asif Zardari has secured the highest constitutional office for a record second time for a civilian; at 68, he is the youngest president till he is 73. All these projections matter little as health and lifespan are the two great unknowns. However, office and power are greater predictors of longevity than lifestyle choices and genes.

Imran Khan is the only political prisoner who has so far not developed a list of ailments requiring hospitalisation and treatment abroad. It must be mentioned, however, that he is also the only one to have worn a cast over gunshot wounds for months. The die may have been cast for the people; for the real and pretend rulers, there are options galore at home and abroad. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Jam Kamal engages with sugar mills, ethanol manufacturers to overcome challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan here on Monday convened significant meetings with representatives of the Sugar Mills Association and Ethanol Manufacturer Association separately to address pressing concerns affecting their industries. The meetings, held in the Ministry of Commerce, aimed to foster dialogue and find feasible

solutions to the challenges faced by these sectors. The associations appreciated the act of calling stakeholders before making any major decisions. During the discussions, Minister Jam Kamal assured the industrialists of his commitment to advocate for their interests and address their concerns to support the local industry while simultaneously

enhancing export volume to increase foreign reserves. The Sugar Mills Association voiced apprehensions regarding the anticipated increase in tariffs for Molasses exports. Members of the association highlighted the importance of encouraging Molasses exports to bolster foreign reserves. They underscored the need for infrastructure improvements to enhance

terminal capacity, facilitating greater access to international markets. Conversely, representatives of the Ethanol Manufacturer Association emphasized the necessity of long-term policy measures to sustain the domestic ethanol industry. They advocated against allowing excessive Molasses exports, citing the adverse impact on local production.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, chairs significant meetings with representatives from the Sugar Mills Association and Ethanol Manufacturer Association to address pressing concerns affecting their industries.



FAISALABAD: USAID Mission Director Veeraya Kate Somvongsiri and Director Office of Democracy, Rights and Governance Shally Prasad are visiting wheat field at University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF).

Profiteers and hoarders should be dealt with iron hands: Bilal Yasin

LAHORE: An important meeting was held at the Livestock Complex under the chairmanship of Food Minister Punjab Bilal Yasin in which the price and quality of chicken meat was reviewed. Food Minister Punjab expressed concern over the recent rise in prices of chicken meat. He urged the representatives of the Poultry Association to bring down the prices substantially to ensure relief for the people during

the holy month. The representatives of the Poultry Association assured the meeting that necessary steps will be taken to reduce the rate of chicken. According to the details, representatives of Pakistan Poultry Association, Poultry Traders Association and Farms Association attended the meeting along with the Secretary Livestock, Commissioner Lahore and Deputy Commissioner Lahore.

Rupee gains 11 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday strengthened by 11 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.63 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.74. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.7 and Rs281.3, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 19 paise to close at Rs303.51 against the last day's closing of Rs303.32, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

SBP keeps policy rate at 22 per cent with emphasis on continued fiscal consolidation

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Monday, cautiously decided to keep policy rate at 22 per cent on pretext of elevated inflation expectations that required continuity of the current monetary stance to bring inflation down. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) also emphasized on timely realization of planned external inflows along with continued targeted fiscal consolidation for ensuring overall macroeconomic and price

stability, said a statement issued after the MPC meeting here at SBP. The MPC noted that that inflation declined noticeably from second half of fiscal year 2023-24, in line with earlier expectations, however, despite the sharp deceleration in February, the level of inflation remained high and its outlook was susceptible to risks amidst elevated inflation expectations. The committee decided to keep the policy rate unchanged noting that inflation expectations

warranted a cautious approach and required continuity of the current monetary stance to bring inflation down to the target range of 5-7 percent by September 2025. The MPC noted that headline inflation registered a broad-based and considerable year on year decline from 28.3 percent in January to 23.1 percent in February, food inflation continued to trend down and core inflation also decelerated to 18.1 percent in February from 20.5 percent in January.

Slash spending-ramp up income way forward to boost economy: Qaiser

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said on Monday that the government was keen to reduce the expenditure and increase the means of income by introducing the favorable environment for businesses and industries.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that the Punjab government provided relief to the people during the holy month of Ramadan. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was optimistic to improve the economy through the growth of business and industries, he added.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, Wan Hai-316, Maersk Chicago, Meratus Jayakarta, Hafnia Shanghai, Bateleur and Elephanta, carrying Container, Gas oil, LPG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, FOTCO Terminal, Southern Gas Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Sunday.

KATI for prioritizing industrial zones in development budget

KARACHI (APP): President Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Johar Qandhari, Monday, felicitated newly elected Sindh cabinet and emphasized need of prioritizing industrial zones while making allocation of development budget. The KATI President, in a statement issued here, expressed hope that incumbent cabinet will address challenges faced by the industrial sector and take decisive action for ensuring a safe and secure environment

for both local and international investors and restore investor confidence. Underlining KATI's history of collaborative efforts with the government, Qandhari reaffirmed the association's commitment to support development of industrial zones across the country. He cited noticeable improvements in the infrastructure of the Korangi industrial area, attributing these advancements to the effective utilization of funds allocated to business organizations.

Business community hails Aurangzeb's appointment at FM: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that the business community hails the appointment of Muhammad Aurangzeb as Finance Minister. In a statement issued here on Monday, he said that as Muhammad Aurangzeb has no political

baggage; therefore, it was hoped that he will make economic decisions on merit and not allow politics to guide the economy. Mian Zahid Hussain further stated that the respected and experienced finance minister can resolve problems confronting the economy if allowed to work independently. He said Muhammad Aurangzeb was a professional and non-political person ready to deliver as expected.

Punjab Governor says: We have to increase number of trees to eliminate effects of environmental pollution

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman along with his wife started the current spring tree planting campaign in Punjab by planting saplings at the Governor House Lahore today.

Governor Punjab said that in the spring, a tree planting campaign will be conducted across the province. He said that people from all walks of life should actively participate in this campaign. Governor Punjab said that from the life and Aha Hadees of the Prophet, we get numerous examples about the importance of trees. Governor Punjab further said that according to experts, each tree provides enough oxygen in a day which is equal to meeting the oxygen requirement of

forty people. Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman said that we have to increase the number of trees and green areas in cities to eliminate the effects of environmental pollution. He said that I also ask the people of the province and especially the children to do your part in this campaign and do your part to make the country greener by planting more trees and focus on their growth along with planting to achieve the objectives of the plantation drive.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan addressing during the 18th sitting of 18th Assembly session of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly under the chair of Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad Advocate.

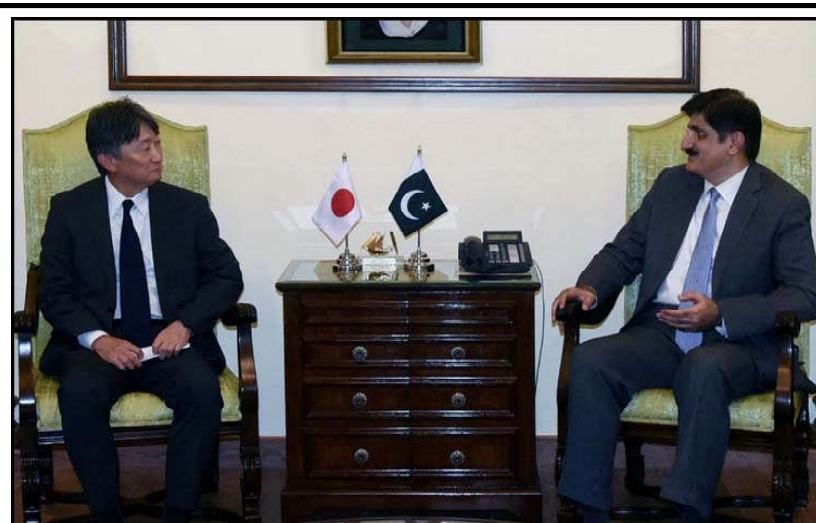
Karachi: Senate nomination papers scrutiny begins

KARACHI (INP): The scrutiny of nomination papers for Senate election begins today (Monday) and will complete on March 19. Overall, 35 candidates including from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), MQM-P and other parties as well as independents have filed nomination papers for 12 Senate seats of Sindh. Returning Officer Sharifullah conducting scrutiny of the nomination papers of the candidates.

reached the RO office for scrutiny of their nomination papers. Twenty-one candidates have submitted nomination papers for general seats in upper house, six candidates file papers for women's two reserved seats, while five candidates have been fielded for technocrats two seats and three candidates filed papers for the minorities reserved seat. According to the election schedule appeals can be filed upto March 21 against approval or rejection of nomination papers.

CM condoles loss of six lives in roof collapse incident

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur on Monday condoled the tragic incident in which six members of a single family lost their lives due to the roof collapse of a house in the Raghzai area of South Waziristan. In a condolence statement, he expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human lives and extended heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the departed souls and for patience for the bereaved, as well as for the speedy recovery of the injured. The Chief Minister directed the relevant district administration to provide immediate relief to the affected family and timely medical assistance to the injured.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah exchanges views with Consul General of Japan, Hattori Masaru during meeting held at CM House.

KP Health Minister chairs review meeting of Sehat Card Plus

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Health, Qasim Ali Shah chaired a review meeting of the Sehat Card Plus programme here on Monday. Besides, the Chief Executive Sehat Card Plus Dr. Riaz Tanoli, DG Health Dr. Shaukat Ali, Director Sehat Card Dr. Ijaz and Fiaz Noor representative State Life Insurance Corporation, others officials also attended the meeting. After the briefing, Health Minister Syed Qasim

Ali Shah informed that from 1st Ramadan to March 16th, the treatment of over 8,000 individuals across various hospitals nationwide has commenced under the Sehat Card Plus Programme, with expenditures exceeding Rs. 172 million. Soon State Life Insurance staff will be available 24/7 at health card counters at hospitals. He revealed that since the reforms in July 2023, expenditures in both public and private hospitals under the Sehat card, have been proportionate.

Youth allegedly abducted from Mathelo By pass

By Tanveer Ahmed
MIRPUR MATHELO: According to details, 22-year-old Hasan Ashfaq son of Ashfaq Arain of Kausar Colony, who left his brother at Ice Factory bus stand of Mirpur Mathelo city, was allegedly kidnapped by bandits. His motorcycle was dumped on the National Highway near FFC.

After the incident, hundreds of people reached the Mirpur Mathelo police station, demanding the police to recover the young man. On behalf of the citizens, Ashfaq, Gul Hasan Soomro, Ejaz Channa and others said that the young Hasan Ashfaq Arain should be recovered.

Minister commits to implement health System improvement roadmap

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has pledged to achieve a hundred per cent implementation of the health system improvement road map outlined by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

Chairing a crucial meeting of the Department of Specialized Health Care and Medical Education on Monday, he emphasized the commitment of the health department towards enhancing healthcare services across the province. He said that under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a new era of prioritizing public health has commenced, with a focus on serving the people effectively. The minister said that Secretary Health Punjab Ali Jan Khan and his dedicated team were tirelessly working towards the betterment of the health system. He asked the health management to provide superior medical facilities to the patients visiting government hospitals. The minister directed to improve waste management systems in government hospitals and ordered the timely completion of ongoing developmental projects aimed at improving healthcare infrastructure.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur-Rehman along with his wife sapling a tree to inaugurate plantation campaign.

Best facilities await Vaisaiki Mela visitors

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Chairman & Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora on Monday strongly condemned the recent attack on the Mir Ali check-post and said that such cowardly acts cannot dampen the spirit of the nation. At a press conference at the Evacuee Trust Property Board office along with ten other committee members, Arora expressed determination to provide better facilities to Sikh pilgrims, and affirmed plans to operationalize three Gurdwaras. He added that the

Sikh Marriage Act had been passed in 2018 and now it would be implemented soon after the approval of the provincial cabinet. He said that the Pakistan Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee had been notified and the ten-member committee would be responsible for all its affairs and a secretariat would be established soon. Ramesh Singh emphasized that land of Gurdwaras would be reclaimed from squatters and special trains would be run to ensure best transportation arrangements for Sikh pilgrims while Gurdwaras would provide the facility of accommodation.

Pakistan army martyrs honored; unity urged against terrorism

TOBA TEK SING (APP): Pakistan People Party (PPP) Pirmahal tehsil president Musharraf Ghous paid rich tribute to Pakistan army martyrs and calls for national unity against terrorism. Speaking to the (APP), Musharraf Ghous, hailed the fallen soldiers of the Pakistan Army as national heroes for their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. Ghous expressed deep condemnation for the recent terrorist incident in North Waziristan, stressing that no amount of condemnation

could suffice. He remained optimistic, asserting that the sacrifices of the martyrs would ultimately lead to the eradication of terrorism from Pakistani soil. Addressing recent statements by an Indian Army general regarding Pakistan's economic strength posing a threat to India, Ghous called for national unity against anti-national elements. He emphasized the need for all political factions to set aside their differences and come together for the country's development.

Seven held for gambling

KARACHI (APP): Keamari District Police in two separate operations have arrested seven suspects involved in gambling activity and recovered the money from their possession besides registering cases for further investigations. According to the SSP Keamari, the suspects were identified as Saaim, Noor Muhammad, Muhammad Kashif, Muhammad Nauman, Shaukat, Muhammad Farhan, and Muhammad Sarwar. The material used for gambling and money were also recovered from the suspects' possession.

International News

Vladimir Putin wins Russia election in landslide with no serious competition

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin won a record post-Soviet landslide in Russia's election on Sunday, cementing his already tight grip on power in a victory he said showed Moscow had been right to stand up to the West and send its troops into Ukraine. Putin, a former KGB lieutenant colonel who first rose to power in 1999, made it clear that the result should send a message to the West that its leaders will have to reckon with an emboldened Russia, whether in war or peace, for many more years to come. The outcome means Putin, 71, is set to embark

on a new six-year term that will see him overtake Josef Stalin and become Russia's longest-serving leader for more than 200 years if he completes it. Putin won 87.8 per cent of the vote, the highest-ever result in Russia's post-Soviet history, according to an exit poll by pollster the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM). The Russian Public Opinion Research Centre (VCIOM) put Putin on 87pc. The first official results indicated the polls were accurate. The United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and other nations have said the vote was neither

free nor fair due to the imprisonment of political opponents and censorship. Communist candidate Nikolai Kharitonov finished second with just under 4pc, newcomer Vladislav Davankov third, and ultra-nationalist Leonid Slutsky fourth, partial results suggested. Putin told supporters in a victory speech in Moscow that he would prioritise resolving tasks associated with what he called Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine and would strengthen the Russian military. "We have many tasks ahead. But when we are

consolidated — no matter who wants to intimidate us, suppress us — nobody has ever succeeded in history, they have not succeeded now, and they will not succeed ever in the future," said Putin. Supporters chanted "Putin, Putin, Putin" when he appeared on stage and "Russia, Russia, Russia" after he had delivered his acceptance speech. Inspired by opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died in an Arctic prison last month, thousands of opponents protested at noon against Putin at polling stations inside Russia and abroad.



CAIRO: Austria's Chancellor Karl Nehammer, Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Cyprus' President Nikos Christodoulides, Belgium's Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, and Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni posing for a photograph during their summit.



Palestinians gather to receive aid outside an UNRWA warehouse as Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger, in Gaza City.

Iran signs deals to boost oil production

Monitoring Desk
TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday sealed contracts worth billions of dollars with domestic companies to boost its oil production in the face of Western sanctions. In a ceremony broadcast on state TV, the oil minister and Iranian businesses signed deals worth \$13 billion to increase daily oil production in six major fields. Shana, the official news agency for the oil industry, labelled the deals as Iran's biggest oil contracts in the past decade and said they aimed to add 350,000 barrels per day to the

country's daily production. In October, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji promised the country's oil production would reach 3.6 million barrels per day by the end of the Persian year on March 19. In the new year under the Persian calendar, "production will reach four million barrels per day", he added. Iran's oil sector suffered a blow in 2018 when Western sanctions were re-imposed, forcing foreign companies to leave the country, after the United States withdrew from a landmark deal designed to curb Tehran's nuclear programme.

World Court to hear Nicaragua-Germany dispute over Israel aid in April

Monitoring Desk
THE HAGUE: The International Court of Justice has said it would hold hearings on April 8 and 9 in Nicaragua's case against Germany for giving military aid to Israel and defunding the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA). Nicaragua asked the ICJ, also known as the World Court, earlier this month to issue emergency measures requiring Berlin to stop military aid to Israel and reverse its decision to stop funding UNRWA.

Israeli strikes on Gaza push death toll to 31,645

Monitoring Desk
GAZA STRIP: At least 61 Palestinians were killed in overnight Israeli bombardment taking the death toll up to 31,645 people, the health ministry in Gaza said on Sunday, as Israel was preparing to send negotiators to new truce talks in Qatar. Israel's security cabinet and the smaller war cabinet were to meet to "decide on the mandate of the delegation in charge of the negotiations before its departure for Doha", the Israeli prime minister's office said. Its statement did not

specify when the delegation would leave for the latest round of talks which comes after Hamas submitted a new proposal for a pause in fighting and release of prisoners. More than five months of war and an Israeli siege have led to dire humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip, where the United Nations has repeatedly warned of looming famine for the coastal territory's 2.4 million people. As the flow of aid trucks into Gaza has slowed, a second ship was due to depart from Cyprus along a new maritime corridor to bring food and relief goods, Cypriot officials said.

Blinken arrives in S. Korea to attend democracy summit

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived on Sunday in South Korea on the first stop of a brief Asia tour also including the Philippines, as Washington moves to reinforce ties with two key regional allies. Blinken landed on Sunday afternoon ahead of

the third Summit for Democracy on Monday, an initiative of US President Joe Biden, which Seoul is hosting this week. The summit, which runs from March 18-20 will bring together government officials, NGOs and civil society members. Seoul is one of Washington's key regional allies.

EU and Cairo sign €7.4bn deal focussed on energy, migration

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: The European Union and Egypt on Sunday signed a 7.4-billion-euro financial package to support the indebted north African country, boost energy sales to Europe and stem irregular migrant flows. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was joined in Cairo by the leaders of Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Italy for the signing ceremony with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

The strategic partnership deal includes billions in credit over coming years and stepping up gas and other energy flows to help Europe "move further away from Russian gas", said a senior European Commission official. Von der Leyen said that "today we elevate the relationship between the EU and Egypt to a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership and we agree on a package ranging from trade and investment to low carbon energy, managing migration, and education, culture and youth".

The agreement includes five billion euros in loans over four years, 1.8 billion euros in investment and hundreds of millions for bilateral projects including on migration, said the European official. Egypt, mired in a painful economic crisis, borders war-battered Libya and the centres of two ongoing conflicts — the Israeli aggression in Gaza Strip and Sudan's war between the regular army forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Russia's ruling party 'hit by cyberattack' during polls

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia's governing party United Russia said on Saturday that it was facing a widespread denial of service attack — a form of cyberattack that snarls internet use — against its online presence, and had suspended non-essential services to repel the attack. Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is running in Russia's presidential election as an independent candidate with United Russia's support,

Indian mob attacks foreign students over namaz

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: Students from different countries were assaulted on Gujarat University campus on Saturday evening, allegedly by a group that did not want them to offer namaz at the hostel. The Wire said on Sunday. It said some injured students have been admitted to SVP Hospital in Ahmedabad. "Around 300 foreign students from Africa, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and other countries study here at the Gujarat Univer-

sity," Ahmedabad Police Commissioner G.S. Malik said, according to The Hindu. "In Block A, around 75 foreign students, who live there, were offering prayers at their hostel yesterday around 10:30pm. "Some 20-25 people entered the hostel premises and objected to the international students offering namaz there, asking them to do so in a mosque. They argued over the issue, assaulted them and hurled stones."

President for further boosting bilateral ties with UAE in diverse fields

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday emphasised the need for further boosting of bilateral ties between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the areas of trade, economy, aviation, renewable energy, climate change and human resource development for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries.

The president expressed these views while talking to Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Talking to the ambassador, the president urged the need to increase collaboration in the aviation industry to facilitate the Pakistani diaspora in the UAE, including the initiation of commercial flights of Airbus A380s.

He said that Emirati businesses should be encouraged to invest in the Pakistan Stock Exchange to infuse innovative ideas and more capital in Pakistan's

economy. Talking about Sindh, the president apprised that Pakistan had started investing in mangrove forests and was trading carbon credits in the international market. He suggested that Pakistan and the UAE should mutually benefit from this opportunity. He said that projects had been undertaken for the lining of canals to overcome seepage and boost agricultural production. He maintained that Pakistan and the UAE needed to collaborate in the agricultural sector by sharing new technologies as food security was a growing concern for the region due to climate change.

During the meeting, the ambassador highlighted that the UAE was committed to Pakistan's development and would continue to stand with Pakistan. He stressed the need to transform the existing bilateral relationship into a strategic partnership between Pakistan and the UAE.

He also called for focusing on economic diplomacy, adding that big com-

panies from the UAE were keen to invest in aviation, agriculture, renewable energy (solar), education, and healthcare in Pakistan. He informed that the UAE had recently hosted COP-28 and pledged \$100 million for the "loss & damage" fund to help vulnerable countries deal with the adverse effects of climate change. He said that Pakistan could benefit from this fund to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The ambassador congratulated President Asif Ali Zardari on becoming the President for the second term and extended best wishes on behalf of the leadership and people of the UAE. He further reaffirmed their strong commitment to reinforce the bond of friendship between the two countries. He also extended an invitation to the president to visit the UAE, which the president accepted.

The president thanked the UAE's leadership for warm greetings and messages of felicitation and said that the UAE was very close to his heart.



Federal Minister of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain being presented shield by Federal Secretary of Overseas Pakistanis Dr. Arshad Mehmood on his visit to Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution in Islamabad

KSA to establish a state-of-the-art skill university in Pakistan to meet skilled workers demand

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development recently has planned to propose the dedication of a special quota for Pakistani skilled and semi-skilled workers for NEOM and other upcoming projects.

Additionally, a proposal for Saudi Arabia to establish a state-of-the-art Skill University in Pakistan further aligns the two nations in their pursuit of economic transformation, an official source told APP.

LoU signed to improve health & well being of school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Directorate General of Basic Education Community Schools (BECS) and Project Planning and Development Unit (PPDU) under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (M/oF&PT) and Muslim Hands Pakistan on Monday signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) here on Monday. The LoU is aimed at establishing a framework for cooperation to improve health and well-being of school children and staff by enhancing access to

clean water, sanitation facilities, hygiene education, and basic education necessities, said a press release.

Director General of BECS, Hameed Khan Niazi and Executive Director Muslim Hands Syed Javed Gillani signed on the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations.

As per the agreement, both sides parties shall collaborate on initiatives and projects related to the School WASH Programme in Islamabad Capital Territory. This partnership shall

commence on 20th March 2024 and shall remain in force for the next 01 year, unless terminated earlier by mutual agreement or due to specific circumstances as outlined herein. The Directorate General of BECS and PPDU shall identify and provide a list of 25 schools in Islamabad in need of WASH interventions (out of school children). Further, they would be required to facilitate the coordination with school administrations for the smooth execution of WASH projects.

The visit aims to enhance crucial remittances, contributing to the stability of Pakistan's economy and supporting the economic well-being of families that rely solely on these financial inflows.

Which was aimed at fostering collaboration and exploring employment opportunities for the Pakistani workforce in the Kingdom.

Corneal donations transform thousands of lives, 9000 people await transplant, says President Al-Shifa

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: President Al-Shifa Trust, Maj. Gen (Ret) Rehmat Khan has said that corneal contributions had the potential to give a fresh lease on life to thousands of people as nine thousand people were on the trust's waiting list for corneal transplants.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he noted that the trust receives 800 corneal donations annually and has increased its capacity accordingly. However, the majority on the waiting list have to wait for years to get their vision restored and become useful citizens.

According to Maj. Gen (Ret) Rehmat Khan, there was a significant disparity between supply and demand of cornea in Pakistan and throughout the world, with corneal blindness accounting for up to 15% of all cases of blindness.

He urged the masses to donate corneas, pointing out that in the previous thirty years, only two people had donated cor-



nated corneas; as a result, corneas must be imported from the USA and Sri Lanka.

A cornea is one of the simplest tissues to transplant because the donor and recipient do not need to match. He said it is a bloodless tissue that absorbs oxygen straight from the atmosphere.

He went on to say that corneas from the elderly can be removed and transplanted into the eyes of much younger people.

According to Maj. Gen. (Ret) Rehmat Khan, the Al-Shifa Trust has begun corneal transplants at its Sukkar hospital in addition to its Rawalpindi facility. In Sukkar Hospital, 50 corneal transplants have been completed successfully to date at no cost.

Eighty percent of all surgeries performed at the Al-Shifa eye hospitals in Rawalpindi, Sukkur, Kohat, Muzaffarabad, and Chakwal are free of charge. So far, the trust has performed over one million different eye surgeries.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Pakistan, Mr. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Punjab unveils budget worth over 4,480.7 billion rupees

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly has presented the three-month budget proposals for the provincial budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 for approval, the total amount of which is 4480.7 billion rupees.

The total income is estimated at 3331 billion 70 crore rupees. 2706 billion 40 crore rupees will be obtained for Punjab from the distributable income of the federation under the NFC award.

While the provincial revenue has been estimated at 625.30 billion rupees with an increase of 25 percent from last year

in which 240 billion rupees are expected to be collected from the Punjab Revenue Authority with a 26 percent increase, 99.20 billion rupees from the Board of Revenue with a 4 percent increase and 45.50 billion rupees from the Excise Department with a 5 percent increase.

The spokesman said that the non-tax revenue has been estimated at 231.80 billion rupees with an increase of 42 percent. In the current financial year, 513.73 billion rupees for salaries, 392.10 billion rupees for pensions and 627.70 billion rupees have been allocated for local

governments.

The development budget for the financial year 2023-24 is estimated at 655 billion rupees, while the amount allocated for projects / programs / grants supported by foreign aid is 113.2 billion rupees.

36 percent of the development budget consists of social sector, 39 percent infrastructure, 8 percent production sector and 4 percent services sector. Similarly, 13 percent of the development budget has been allocated for various programs and public welfare special initiatives.

Determination of sugar prices: Matter referred to SC admin committee for constitution of larger bench

ISLAMABAD (Online): The matter has been referred to Supreme Court (SC) Administrative Committee for constitution of larger bench in the case pertaining to determination of sugar prices.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah took up the case for hearing Monday.

Shahzad Ata Elahi counsel for sugar mills took the plea in the court that act-1977 pertaining to determination of prices of sugar has been challenged. As per SC Practice and

Procedure Act, larger bench should be constituted. The federal government issued order for fixing the prices of sugar in the country in July 2021 and September 2021. He further said government notification was challenged in high court. The decision came in favor of sugar mills. Government had enacted law for determination of sugar prices in 1977. The government issued notification keeping in view the 1977 law.

As per federal legislative list parliament had no powers to determine prices of food items.



ISLAMABAD: Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Federal Minister for Housing and Works, chaired a meeting of Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA). Dr. Shahzad Khan Bangash, Secretary Housing and Works, was also present during the meeting.

Nowshera police target drug trafficking

By M.Ilyas

PESHAWAR: District Police Officer Muhammad Azhar Khan has launched a determined crackdown on drug dealers in Nowshera, emphasizing the imperative to safeguard the youth from the pernicious influence of narcotics.

Under the banner of the "Drug-Free Nowshera" initiative, a ten-day operation has been launched across the district, targeting drug trafficking at the grassroots level. The campaign, spearheaded by District Police Officer Muhammad Azhar Khan, aims to combat the menace of drug trafficking, which poses a grave threat to the future of the nation's youth. Various police stations throughout the district have reported significant seizures as a result of the intensified efforts.

According to official reports, several police stations have made substantial seizures during the ongoing operation. Notable among these are Nowshera Cantt police station, which seized 4.757 kilograms of hashish and 421 grams of ice; Badrashi police station, which confiscated 1.01 kilograms of hashish and 925

grams of ice; and Azakhel police station, where 7.21 kilograms of hashish and 1.37 kilograms of ice were seized. Furthermore, Klan police station reported the seizure of 23.243 kilograms of hashish, 2.367 kilograms of ice, and 1.11 kilograms of heroin. Similarly, Pabi police station seized 1.61 kilograms of hashish, 1.196 kilograms of ice, and 190 grams of heroin, while Jalozai police station recovered 8.47 kilograms of hashish and 112 grams of ice.

The crackdown extended across the district, with Akbarpura police station seizing 4.803 kilograms of hashish and 510 grams of ice, and Akora police station recording a significant seizure of 29.751 kilograms of hashish and 1.114 kilograms of ice. Nizampur police station also contributed to the efforts, seizing 8.671 kilograms of hashish and 170 grams of ice, while Misri Banda police station recovered 12.886 kilograms of hashish and 268 grams of ice. In addition to the seizures, law enforcement authorities have taken stringent action against suspects involved in drug trafficking.

11th death anniversary of 1965 War Hero MM Alam observed

ISLAMABAD (Online): The 11th death anniversary of 1965 War Hero Muhammad Mahmood Alam, popularly known as M M Alam was observed on Monday.

Pakistan Air Force legendary war hero M M Alam, nicknamed while piloting an F-86 Sabre, shot down five Indian war planes in less than a minute during 1965 Pak-India war and altogether, downed nine war planes in the aerial fight.

MM Alam was the first ever fighter pilot for PAF, listed on top in the hall of famers' list at the PAF Museum in Karachi.

Dry weather to prevail in most parts of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mainly dry weather is expected in most parts of the country during the next 24 hours according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast.

As per the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the country.

The weather will remain dry in most parts of Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the next 24 hours.

During the last 24 hours, dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country while the weather remained cold in upper areas.

On the eve of Ramadan QC supports communities with 1800 food packages

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a gesture of solidarity and compassion, the Qatar Charity (QC) Pakistan has distributed 1800 Ramadan food packages across several districts of Balochistan province to support and uplift the deserving families during the holy month.

The distribution, organized by Qatar Charity Pakistan, was carried out in collaboration with local partners and authorities. Around 300 food packages were allocated to each of the following districts such as Quetta, Pishin, Chaman, KillaSaifullah, Loralai, and Chaghi, said a press release issued here on Monday.

The food packages contain essential items to assist families in observing the fasting month with dignity and ease.

Speaking on the occasion, Regional Head of Qatar Charity Quetta, Ejazur-Rehman said, "Qatar Charity is committed to serve communities in need,

and we are honored to extend our support to the people of Balochistan. Through initiatives like these, we aim to alleviate the hardships faced by deserving families, especially during the sacred month of Ramadan."

Qatar Charity Pakistan utilized its own resources to orchestrate this benevolent endeavor, reflecting the organization's dedication in fostering sustainable development and social welfare in Pakistan. By providing essential food supplies, Qatar Charity seeks to alleviate hunger and promote a sense of solidarity among communities, fostering a spirit of compassion and support during Ramadan.

This distribution represents just one facet of Qatar Charity's broader commitment to humanitarian assistance and community development in the country and around the world.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddique officially assumed charge.

DC issues directives for anti-dengue operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad has chaired a high-level meeting to address the looming threat of dengue fever in the federal capital and directed the concerned to initiate a drive without any delay to combat the potential outbreak.

According to the spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabassum, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad emphasized the unwavering commitment to the fight against the dengue virus.

Notably, special attention would be given to rural areas to safeguard all citizens from potential harm.

On the occasion, he

issued instructions to the department concerned to start the surveillance drive against dengue to control the hazard in the area.

Meanwhile, he said that the safety of citizens was the topmost priority of the district administration and the department would leave no stone unturned to maintain a healthy atmosphere in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by the officials of Local Government, CDA Sanitation, CDA Environment, Endowments Department, Union Council Sectors, MCI Health Services, Surveillance teams, District Health Officers, Assistant Commissioners, Magistrates and other stakeholders.

CDA to construct 374 km long cycling track in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA), is taking measures to provide a healthy environment to the citizens. In this regard, it has been decided to construct bicycle lanes along the highways in different sectors and areas of Islamabad in order to promote the bicycle culture in the city by implementing the instructions of the Chairman CDA. According to the details, under the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Bicycle Lab Project (BLP), 374 km long cycling track would be constructed in different areas and sectors of Islamabad in

a period of 18 months at a cost of 2.4 billion rupees.

This cycling track will be constructed on highways connected to Purple Line Metro Bus project including Khayaban Iqbal, Sector G-6, G-7, G-8, Green Double Lane, Jinnah Avenue, Red Double Line, so that the passengers leaving the metro bus could also use the cycling track. Similarly, under this project, every sector of Islamabad would be connected with a cycling track. Moreover, 150 parking stands will also be constructed under the Bicycle Lab Project (BLP) so that the citizens can benefit from the facilities like bikes.



ISLAMABAD: Per Albert Ilsaacs, Ambassador of Norway meet Chairman Red Crescent Pakistan Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari.

Electricity bills SC issues notice to govt on petition against imposition of further taxes, other taxes

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has issued notice to federal government and all other respondents on the petitions against imposition of further taxes and other taxes in electricity bills.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by Justice Mansoor Afi Shah took up the case for hearing Monday.

The counsel for the petitioners took the plea that registration law is not applicable to the institutions which

have filed petitions. Further tax and extra tax is applicable to those institutions which don't get them registered. Our institutions are already paying GST.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah remarked half tax will not be paid. It is strange thing. You otherwise should say that no tax is applicable to you.

The court while issuing notice has adjourned the hearing of the case till April 25.