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President, PM applauds security forces for foiling attack

Security forces foil attack on Gwadar complex, kill 8 terrorists

Attackers killed while trying to gain entry into GPA complex, two soldiers embrace martyrdom

GWADAR (Agencies): The security forces on Wednesday repulsed an attack by militants on a complex outside the strategic port of Gwadar, killing all eight of them, officials said.

China has invested heavily in the mineral-rich southwestern province of Balochistan, including developing Gwadar, despite a decades-long separatist insurgency.

Armed with guns and bombs, the militants stormed the Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) complex just outside the port that houses offices of government departments, intelligence agencies and paramilitary forces, said Saeed Ahmed Umrani, a government commissioner.

The militants detonated a number of bombs before launching a shooting attack and trying to storm the complex, he said.

In a post on social media platform X, Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti said eight militants were "neutralised by security forces", adding: "The message is loud & clear. Whosoever chooses to use violence will see no mercy from the state."

The military said in a statement issued later in the

evening that a group of eight terrorists attempted to enter Port Authority Colony in Gwadar, which was successfully thwarted by the security forces personnel.

"Own troops employed for security responded immediately and effectively engaged the terrorists, and in ensuing fire exchange, all eight terrorists were sent to hell," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

A large quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the killed terrorists.

"However, during the intense exchange of fire, two brave soldiers; Sepoy Bahar Khan (age: 35 years, resident of District DG Khan) and Sepoy Imran Ali (age: 28 years, resident of District Khairpur) having fought gallantly, sacrificed their lives and embraced Shahadat," said the military's media wing.

"Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan, and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," it added.



GWADAR: View of site after unidentified gunmen opened fire at Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Complex in Gwadar.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

COAS calls on Mohammad Bin Salman Saudi Crown Prince expresses desire to further strengthen bilateral ties with Pakistan

RAWALPINDI (Online): Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman has expressed desire to further strengthen bilateral relations with Pakistan.

He was talking to Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir who called on him during his official visit to the Kingdom.

Mohammad Bin Salman said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will always stand by Pakistan in future as well.

He highlighted KSA and Pakistan have historic brotherly and strong relations and both countries have always stood up for each other.

During the visit, the

Army Chief also met with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Chief of General Staff Saudi Armed Forces General Fayyadh Bin Hamed Al Ruwaili, Saudi Assistant Minister of Defense Engineer Talal Abdullah Al Otaibi and other senior military leadership.

Wide ranging issues of mutual interest, including regional peace and security and bilateral defence and security cooperation came under discussion.

The Army Chief thanked the Saudi leadership for the warm sentiments and support for Pakistan.



RIYADH: Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir exchanging views with Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, The Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during meeting held in Riyadh.

False narrative of Imran about Cipher distorted relations at int'l level: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has said today's hearing at the US Congress about the Cipher has again proved that Cipher conspiracy of PTI is a lie and complete false.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad tonight, he said the false narrative of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founding chairman about Cipher distorted our relations at the international level.

The Minister said today's hearing also proved the PTI chairman as certified liar, who misled the entire nation and the youth by constantly speaking lies.

He said the false narrative of PTI founding chairman was also exposed in the Congress hearing,

which was even arranged by the PTI after hiring lobbying firms in the United States.

Ataullah Tarar said PTI, under a well hatched conspiracy, put the interests of the state at the stake just to promote its political narrative and single person prioritized his personal interests over the state interests.

He said it has rarely happened in the history of Pakistan that political leader compromised national interests just for his personal gains.

The Minister said PTI is doing politics of double standard. He said the US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Donald Lu also mentioned that five thousand independent observers monitored the elections process.

ISI chief briefs President on security situation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lt-General Nadeem Anjum on Wednesday visited the

Presidency and briefed President Asif Ali Zardari on a string of issues, sources said. President Asif Zardari welcomed the ISI chief at the Aiwan-i-Sadr after which they held a detailed meeting. The meeting covers issues including internal security and situation at the borders.

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NACTA to be restructured on modern lines: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD: Federal

minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi here on Wednesday visited National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) headquarters. He presided over an important meeting where several major decisions were taken, out of which one was to restructure NACTA on modern lines as well as to place it on the front in war against terrorism.

The meeting also decided to summon a meeting of the Coordination Committee of the National Action Plan in the next week which will be presided over by Interior Minister.

The minister said that instead of taking action after every incident of terrorism, we must take early action to eliminate terrorists and their facilitators.

He called for a detailed report on the efficiency of all provincial Counter Terrorism Departments (CTD).

He said that establishment of National CTD is the need of the hour for complete elimination of terrorism. Naqvi said a comprehensive strategy should be formulated against terrorism and extremism adding that the National Action Plan should be fully implemented.

Lu's statement came during a hearing conducted by the US Congress Committee regarding the 2024 general elections in Pakistan, where he provided testimony on the matter.

Asserting respect for Pakistan's sovereignty, he emphasized that the allegations of US involvement in Imran Khan's removal were

baseless. Addressing concerns surrounding the safety of an American citizen, the Assistant Secretary of State underscored the seriousness with which the United States approaches threats against its citizens. He clarified that any charges related to the cipher were unfounded and based on waivers.

Reflecting on Pakistan's history and the challenges it has faced, Lowe highlighted the nation's resilience, particularly in the context of the Afghan war's impact. He noted the significant participation of women and youth in the recent elections, despite instances of election rigging, violence, and threats.

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu has categorically denied allegations suggesting the United States played any role in the removal of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan from the position of Prime Minister.

Lu's statement came during a hearing conducted by the US Congress Committee regarding the 2024 general elections in Pakistan, where he provided testimony on the matter.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi chairing a high level meeting, at NACTA Headquarters in Islamabad.

Cross-border terrorism will no longer be acceptable: PM

Says Pakistan wants to live peacefully with neighbouring states; Invites countries to come and work together to end terrorism; Says Pakistan has to get rid of debts as they are harmful; PM, cabinet to forgo salaries and perks; calls for Charter of Unity.

ISLAMABAD (INP):

Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stated that Pakistan will not tolerate any more cross-border terror attacks on its soil.

Chairing the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad today, PM Shehbaz Sharif said security of the geographical frontiers of Pakistan is a redline.

Pakistan desires to have cordial relations with the neighboring fraternal countries to promote trade and economic relations. However, it is not acceptable that the land of the neighboring country is used for terrorism in Pakistan, he added.

Shehbaz Sharif proposed the formulation of a joint strategy with the sincerity of purpose to defeat the scourge of terrorism. He said collective efforts against terrorism will help establish peace in the region and address other issues such as that of poverty.

Highlighting the sacrifices rendered by Pakistan in the war on terrorism, the premier reaffirmed the commitment to wipe out the menace of terrorism as was done previously.

Sharif vows to revive Pakistan's economy

Turning to the economic situation, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the country is compelled to secure another IMF package. He however affirmed the commitment to revive the economy and help it stand on its own feet. We have made a conscious decision to minimize borrowing and gradually rid the country of loans.

The premier said an enabling environment will be created to attract investments across various sectors including agriculture, industries, Information Technology and mines and minerals.

He said the Special Investment Facilitation

Council is serving as a robust platform to facilitate investment in the country.

APP adds: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing resolve to streamline the country's economy by bringing strict reforms in all public departments, said the government will adopt zero tolerance policy against power thieves, tax evaders and corrupt elements.

He said the new government with fresh mandate will work diligently to enhance foreign direct investment, expand tax net, minimize tax evasion, reduce public debt, eliminate power theft and implement stern austerity measures in the government departments.

Addressing the first formal meeting of the federal cabinet held here chaired by him, the prime minister said, he had issued orders to completely digitize the

Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as soon as possible to avoid tax evasions.

In this regard, he said that a consultant was being hired for the purpose which would be appointed by next month.

PM Shehbaz regretted that trillions of rupees were being evaded by the mafias. Such mafias, he said run businesses worth billions of rupees but they pay zero tax due to undocumented transactions. With digitization of the FBR, such mafias would be exposed and apprehended, he said. He said Rs 2.4 trillion worth of tax cases were currently pending either in the tribunals or in the courts which needed to be concluded as early as possible. "I request the Chief Justice Supreme Court of Pakistan to help early conclusion of all such sub-judice cases."

Further, he said he had also directed to draw a list of honest and efficient officers to encourage them and

acknowledge their services.

On the other hand, the prime minister vowed to take strict action against the officers involved in corrupt activities.

He pointed out that in the previous government, the coalition government had saved the country when it was on the verge of default by putting its politics at stake.

Similarly, he said the annual power theft in the country was around Rs 500 billion which was alarmingly high and needed to be stopped immediately.

"I have categorically told the concerned authorities to present a comprehensive road map for complete elimination of the electricity theft and pilferage in the country," he said adding that in this way any kind of resistance will not be accepted.

"There will be zero tolerance...there will be no tolerance to this theft and pilferage."

President for expanding scope of Pak-Japan cooperation

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday called for expanding the scope of bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Japan across a wide spectrum of areas, especially trade, investment, economy, culture and people-to-people contacts. The president, talking to the Ambassador of Japan Mitsuhiro Wada, who called on him, said that Pakistan was a huge market and Japanese businesses should benefit from

the economic opportunities by investing in diverse sectors.

He said that both countries had been enjoying long-standing relations, which needed to be further cemented for the mutual benefit of the two sides.

He highlighted that Japan had been a key development partner of Pakistan that had been supporting Pakistan's socio-economic development in different sectors under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

He further said that

Pakistan had a huge population and could send the trained workforce and professionals to help Japan fulfill its requirement for human resources.

The president said that Japanese automobile companies, based in Pakistan, should enhance production to export their products from Pakistan.

The Japanese banks should also be encouraged to restart their operations in Pakistan, he said and reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to overcome its current socio-economic challenges.

President approves dismissal of Justice Mazhar Ali Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Dismissal of former Supreme Court judge Mazhar Ali Naqvi was approved by President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday.

The approval was given by the president after the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) found Justice Naqvi guilty of misconduct.

After withdrawal of the previous notification by the Ministry of Law accepting Naqvi's resignation as a judge, a new notification terminating his services was issued.

Two terrorists killed as many injured in N Waziristan operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two terrorists were killed and as many injured by the security forces during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted on the night of March 19th and 20th in North Waziristan District, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Wednesday.

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif witnessed the signing of memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Transport Department and Bank of Punjab for provision of 20,000 bikes to students on easy installments, here on Wednesday. Secretary Transport Ahmed Javed Qazi and President Bank of Punjab Zafar Masood signed the MoU.

Terminating the step a revolutionary initiative for students, the CM said that these bikes would be

provided to students under the Chief Minister's Youth Initiative scheme. She said 19,000 petrol and 1,000 electric bikes would be given to students free of interest in monthly installments, adding that the monthly installment of petrol bike would be Rs 5000, whereas it would be less than Rs 10,000 for the e-bike. The CM said the Punjab government would bear interest on providing bikes to students on easy installments in collaboration with the Bank of Punjab, adding that the provision of bikes to students would revolutionise their lives.

CM witnesses MoU signing ceremony for providing 20,000 bikes to students

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Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Austerity theatre

The government's recent unveiling of 'austerity' measures, ostensibly aimed at reducing expenses, appears to be more about show than actual substance.

While restricting cabinet members to three international trips per year and delineating travel class guidelines for various officials might seem like prudent steps, they barely scratch the surface of the belt-tightening needed to navigate Pakistan through its financial quagmire.

The decisions by the president and interior minister to forgo their salaries, though commendable on the surface, pale in comparison to the extravagance that continues to plague government spending. The gesture does little to address the underlying issues of fiscal irresponsibility that have led to our current economic predicament.

Allowing MNAs and senior bureaucrats the luxury of business class travel — which in practical terms for a return ticket to many European destinations means spending approximately a million rupees — is a slap in the face of the concept of fiscal restraint. The image of lawmakers and bureaucrats jet-setting on public coin sends a conflicting message to the populace they serve, especially when 40pc of the people fall below the poverty line.

The disparity in salary ratios between various employees in the UK and Pakistan serves as a shameful mirror for reflection. In the UK, the salary ratio between a janitor and the senior-most bureaucrat is 1:8, whereas in Pakistan, it is an astounding 1:80. The officials who think they are tightening their belts by not flying first class (the president and chief justice can, however) are sorely mistaken.

The austerity narrative pushed by the government — indeed like all other governments before it — collapses under the weight of these contradictions. The privileging of a select few to cushy travel perks, while a significant chunk of the nation struggles to eat three square meals a day, is not austerity; it is austerity theatre.

The critique here is not merely about the scale of the measures but their sincerity. Real austerity involves hard choices and genuine sacrifice, not selective tokenism. The continued allowance of benefits and the half-measures proposed signal a troubling lack of commitment to governance and fiscal responsibility. If the government means business, lawmakers would do well to pass a resolution in parliament refusing such privileges until the economy stabilises. The PM, services chiefs, and at best, the foreign minister may utilise such travel perks but it is unreasonable to extend these to the rest of the government machinery.

Symbolic gestures won't do anymore. There is a need for a fundamental reassessment of priorities and spending, with a laser focus on eliminating waste and directing resources towards sustainable economic recovery. Only then can the nation hope to emerge from its economic plight and embark on a future marked by stability and prosperity.

Russian roulette

Mahir Ali

A thumping majority for Vladimir Putin in his fifth bid for the Russian presidency was a foregone conclusion, even though its size surprised even seasoned analysts. It's a 10 per cent improvement on his 77.5pc score in 2018, and his initial candidacy in 2000 was rewarded with little more than 53pc of the popular vote.

The electoral exercise that began last Friday and concluded on Sunday was not billed as a wartime affair, given that the aggression against Ukraine has officially been designated as a special military operation. But a war by any other name smells just as foul, and there is little evidence that most Russians buy the Kremlin's narrative that this sordid conflict bears any resemblance to the 'great patriotic war' of 1941-45, in which the Soviet Red Army ultimately routed the Nazis.

Russian accounts frequently neglect to mention that Josef Stalin panicked when Adolf Hitler betrayed the Nazi-Soviet pact, having ignored reports of an imminent German invasion from his spies. Or that Soviet military strategy went awry until Stalin left it to the generals. After the war, the domestic politics of paranoia resurfaced. In the first phase during the 1930s, Stalin had physically eliminated all conceivable rivals as well as numerous competent military leaders, which facilitated the initial Nazi cackwalk through vast tracts of Soviet territory.

Putin's Stalin-esque paranoia has been evident since his earliest days at the helm. Many perceived opponents — from recalcitrant oligarchs and disenchanted intelligence agents to journalists and politicians — died in mysterious circumstances, as did politi-

cal rival Alexei Navalny in a Siberian prison colony recently.

I find it hard to share Western and Russian liberals' enthusiasm for Navalny as an antidote to the poison Putin has injected into the lifeblood of Russia, notwithstanding his worthy anti-corruption crusade. But he certainly deserved the opportunity to face Putin on a level electoral playing field. He wouldn't have won, but the impression of an autocrat backed by more than 87pc of Russians might have been averted.

Of course, an imprisoned Navalny would not have been permitted to contest, so his elimination can perhaps only be explained by visceral hatred, or as a means of limiting the challenge to any of Putin's successors.

The irony of Russia's recent history is that the federation's least undemocratic election occurred during the last months of the Soviet era, in March 1991. Boris Yeltsin won it with more than 58pc of the popular vote, despite the antipathy of the Gorbachev government. Yeltsin went on to play a key role in reversing the absurd August coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. Emboldened by Western backing, he went on to dismantle the USSR in collaboration with the elected leaders of Ukraine and Belarus, ignoring the non-Slav components of the union and superseding a new union treaty that Gorbachev was on the verge of finalising.

We will never know how long a reformed Soviet Union, composed of sovereign states that finally enjoyed the autonomy from Moscow that Vladimir Lenin had argued for 70 years earlier, might have lasted. The Yeltsin regime destroyed a moribund economy desperate for renewal but replaced it with predatory capitalism.

He also deployed the army against parliament, and incarcerated politicians included his vice president, Aleksandr Rutskoi (a former war prisoner in Pakistan during the Afghan conflict).

The 1996 election went to a second round, and Yeltsin beat the fairly dismal Com-munist Party candidate, Gen-nady Zyu-ga-nov, with the aid of authorised foreign interference — primarily from America. The services of the nefarious intelligence agency, the FSB, may also have been invoked. Its first director was a former KGB agent and deputy mayor of St Petersburg, who was named prime minister in 1999. Shortly afterwards, Yeltsin quit, having been offered immunity from prosecution for corruption, and named Putin as acting president. The rest is recent history.

Stalinism could not even begin to be exercised until the dictator's demise in March 1953, after 30 years in power, and it is widely assumed that Putin's exit from the Kremlin will also involve a coffin. That could be a long time coming, and it would be inhumane to prolong the Ukraine war indefinitely. In that context, Pope Francis' much-pollarded advice on pursuing peace makes far more sense than the gung-ho blather from Nato's Jens Stoltenberg or the EU's Ursula von der Leyen.

Besides, let's not forget that popular support for Putin is only reinforced by Western Russophobia that cancels Chekhov and Tchaikovsky, and queries Russian cultural and sports figures about their views on the Ukraine war. What are the chances that Israeli or Jewish participants in any event might be asked whether they support the genocide in Gaza? -- Courtesy Dawn

The Bhutto wound

Muhammad Ali Siddiqi

The Supreme Court's March 6 judgement gives valid legal reasons why the trial that led to the verdict ordering Z.A. Bhutto's execution in 1979 did not meet the requirements of the "fundamental right to a fair trial and due process..."

Decades earlier, Dorab Patel, one of Pakistan's most illustrious legal minds, called Bhutto's hanging "a judicial murder". However, for the people of Pakistan, especially those belonging to the generation that lived through the traumatic 1970s, Bhutto's murder was the aim of the general — and his flunkies — who seized power through a coup on a date that is part of our national memory: July 5, 1977.

Gen Ziaul Haq seized power in the wake of a countrywide movement launched by a nine-party alliance called the Pakistan National Alliance against the alleged rigging of the general election — something de rigueur in Pakistan if you lose the polls.

Zia promised to the people of Pakistan he would "inshallah" hold elections within 90 days and went on to rule until his death 11 years later.

Initially he showed some sincerity, kept in detention an equal number of leaders from both Bhutto's PPP and the PNA, and then released them. He had assumed that the PNA's nationwide agitation and its ability to bring the country to a halt had proved Bhutto had lost his popularity, and a fresh election would give the PNA a sweeping victory.

After his release, Bhutto made a brilliant tactical move and decided to travel to Karachi by train. Huge crowds greeted him at railway stations, making Zia and his PNA supporters

realise Bhutto still had his charisma. I was there at Karachi's Cantonment Station to judge whether the reports about the former prime minister getting huge receptions were true. I perched myself on the steps of a railway bridge and waited, wondering if this was the right perch. And lo and behold, Bhutto's carriage stopped right in front of me. He was wearing a cream-coloured shalwar kameez, and he had a cold for there was a handkerchief in his hand.

Something told me it was the last time I was looking at him. The next day was perhaps the first of Ramazan, and just to prove that my feelings were wrong I went to his residence, 70 Clifton. There were security people outside, besides many VIPs who wanted to see him, but Bhutto was in conference with the top PPP leadership and no one was allowed in.

What happened at the crucial conference became known much later. Bhutto was clear in his mind and guessed how his enemies would react. He pleaded for an election boycott. The majority opposed him, saying the PNA would be delighted and would claim Bhutto was running away from elections. Bhutto argued that an election without the PPP would mean a sweeping PNA victory, and he would tackle the civilian government once the military was gone.

When the clamour for election continued, Bhutto said one thing repeatedly in Urdu: "Elections hongay? Elections hongay? (Will elections be held? Will elections be held?)"

He had read his opponents' minds correctly, and knew they wanted his blood, because the tycoons whose industrial empires

he had nationalised had bankrolled the PNA movement.

Zia and his PNA allies were panicky and wanted the polls ditched. Much later, when Bhutto was dead and the PNA unity had broken up, the former allies went public with how PNA leaders kowtowed to Zia for calling off the elections — a drama Zia was enjoying, pretending to be indecisive about calling off the elections but keen to develop a consensus. Finally, he relented to the joy of his PNA allies, and said he would call off the polls. One leader, according to a PNA veteran, prostrated himself, when the military dictator said he would oblige them.

I was there at Karachi's Nishtar Park, where PPP leader Maulana Kausar Niazi made a brilliant speech full of humour and sarcasm. Then he confirmed what until then was a rumour: "This is the last public meeting and elections are going to be postponed." An ongoing election campaign was called off!

Bhutto was arrested, and Zia had the audacity to declare what has become a shibboleth repeated ad nauseam and as a holy grail — 'pehlay ehtesab, phir intikhab' (accountability first, election later). Ehtesab is the criminal legacy Zia left for subsequent governments, military and civilian, to brazenly persecute the opposition.

Bhutto was buried without his family being shown his face the last time. On Aug 17, 1988, Zia's plane, C-130, Pakistan One, crashed a few miles from the Bahawalpur airfield nose first in the mud close to the Sutlej river.

Bhutto's widow, Begum Nusrat Bhutto, said in Urdu something that can be condensed thus: "God, I have seen -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

PM for including global experts in economic reforms consultation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday decided to include global experts and all stakeholders in the consultation process aimed at improving the economic health and financial stability of the country.

The prime minister would oversee the implementation of the economic reforms.

The prime minister chaired a meeting on economic revival and

reforms, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister said that strengthening of economy was among the top priority of his government.

The prime minister said that the government would provide all facilities to the export industries and increase global market outreach of the country's exports.

He further said that they would increase the tax

net instead increasing taxes, besides supporting small, medium and large industries in the country.

He also asked for submission of reports over economic reforms in different sectors in phases, besides directing to give vital significant to value addition exports in the country's export policy.

He vowed to bring country's exports into international value addition chain.

The expertise of the international experts with

regard to increasing of capability in export sector should be utilized, he observed.

The meeting was attended by federal ministers including Ahsan Iqbal, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Jam Kamal Khan, Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Dr Musadik Malik, Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmed, Jehanzaib Khan, Chairman FBR Malil Amjad Zubair Tiwana, Dr Ejaz Nabi.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Economic Revival and Reforms.



ISLAMABAD: EU Ambassador Riina Kionka calls on Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and congratulates him for assuming the portfolio of Ministry of Commerce.

Chicken, eggs prices reach at Rs 420 per kg, Rs 280 per dozen

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of poultry chicken reached Rs 420 per kg and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 280 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 700 to 710 per kg in the open market, according to the survey conducted by APP here on Wednesday. The price of poultry chickens and eggs has been going above Rs 420 to 280 per kg and dozen for the past last months, which is getting away from the purchasing power of consumers day by day. The prices of

Rupee gains 23 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday strengthened by 23 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.40 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.63. 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 Rs281.45, respectively. The price of the Euro remained unchanged to close at Rs302.35, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.83, whereas an increase of 02 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound.

PEC announces 'Seed Funding Scheme for Engineering Startups'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee (ICE) has invited engineering startups to submission of business proposals under its 'Seed Funding Scheme for Engineering Startups'.

The business proposals addressing key challenges and opportunities in the engineering sector with a focus on sustainable technology development in Agri-tech and Smart-tech are sought from the engineers.

The meeting was attended by federal ministers including Ahsan Iqbal, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Jam Kamal Khan, Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Dr Musadik Malik, Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmed, Jehanzaib Khan, Chairman FBR Malil Amjad Zubair Tiwana, Dr Ejaz Nabi.

PEC announces 'Seed Funding Scheme for Engineering Startups'

About the thematic areas for this scheme, the official of PEC said that the themes for the proposals are Agri-tech and Smart-Tech. Agri-tech is crucial to enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability in the sector of agriculture such as food security, environmental sustainability, and increasing demand for agricultural products, integration of technology in agriculture continues to evolve, offering new opportunities for innovation and improvement in farming practices.

formula and other applicable Pakistan laws and regulations including the Securities Act 2015 and Listed Companies (Substantial Acquisition of Voting Shares and Takeovers) Regulations 2017 ("PAI").

Dr. Khalid Maqbool urges provinces to harmonize food business rules

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has called upon the provincial governments to harmonize rules related to food businesses.

In separate letters addressed to each chief ministers of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan, Dr. Siddiqui highlighted the need for uniformity to ensure food safety and quality nationwide.

The minister said the existing disparities in

regulations and enforcement mechanisms among provinces and federal agencies have resulted in inconsistencies, inefficiencies and potential gaps in ensuring the safety and quality of food products available to consumers nationwide and for import and export purposes. He emphasized the role of the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) as the national standards body and advocated for streamlining standards to prevent

duplication of efforts between PSQCA and provincial authorities. He said PSQCA is the sole national standards body to establish standards for all food and non-food products, services and processes. "After the 18th amendment, provinces started establishing their own standards which are against the international best practices", the letter said. The minister noted that manufacturers were suffering because of the duplication of these activities by PSQCA and provincial food authorities.

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Wilmar unit to make further investment in Pak-listed Unity Foods

Independent Report KARACHI: Wilmar Pakistan Holdings Pte. Ltd. ("WPH", a wholly owned direct subsidiary of Wilmar International Limited), Unity Wilmar Agro (Private) Limited ("UWA", a 52% subsidiary of WPH) and certain shareholders of Unity Foods Limited ("UFL") have, through Arif Habib Limited (in its capacity as the manager to the public offer), made a public announcement to the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited of their intention to acquire up to 277,070,908 shares of UFL in the public offer, at the price that complies with the pricing

estimated Fortune 500 company, reaffirms its commitment to Pakistan's economy through its investment in Unity Foods Limited (UFL), demonstrating confidence in the resilience and potential of Pakistan's economic landscape. This collaboration not only strengthens bilateral business ties but also underscores Unity Foods Limited's pivotal role in attracting foreign investment, fostering economic growth, and facilitating development in Pakistan. Wilmar International Limited is the ultimate acquirer or the

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Minister directs completion of centralized database software in 25 districts

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Excise, Mian Khaleeq-ur-Rehman has directed to complete centralized database software in 25 districts of the province. He was chairing a meeting regarding Motor Vehicle Software Database and Software Up gradation here on Wednesday. The minister said that transparent system of taxation was being introduced in the province while digitization has been

brought in excise an taxation system for facilitation of people. He also directed steps to resolve technical problems in Motor Vehicle Software Database and its implementation all over the province. He directed to complete database in 25 districts of the province and added that integrated system would soon be developed for online verification of property and motorcar taxation. Excise minister said that citizen service.



GILGIT: Minister Agriculture Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Anwar speaks during the 3rd sitting of 18th Session of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly under the chair of Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad Advocate.

Ramazan Ration bags LHC rejects plea seeking immediate removal of Nawaz Sharif picture

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has rejected the plea seeking immediate removal of Nawaz Sharif picture from Ramazan ration bags. Justice Shahid Karim of LHC took up the petition for hearing Wednesday. Counsel Salma Riaz gave arguments on behalf of the petitioner. The court rejected the plea for removing Nawaz Sharif picture from ration bags related to Ramazan package forthwith. The court while issuing notice to Punjab government sought reply.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Trade and Industry presiding over a meeting of Punjab Small Industries Corporation.

KP gov't committed to underprivileged children's uplift: CM

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur has said that the government is committed to uplifting the lives of underprivileged children. He expressed these views during his visit to the state children institution- ZamungKor campus here. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said it was the government's responsibility to ensure the well-being and development of children, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. As part of efforts, he said that the government would fulfill its responsibilities by providing the children of ZamungKor with the best education, food and other necessary facilities. An Ifar Dinner was also arranged for children and staff of the campus where the chief minister interacted and distributed cash prizes among the children. He also visited various sections of the ZamungKor and lauded staff's services and their profound commitment to ensuring a brighter future for the children of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He also assured his all out support of his government for fulfilling requirements and needs of the children. Assistant Director of the campus, Rafiullah Khan expressed gratitude for the Chief Minister's visit and pledged to continue working closely with the government to meet the essential needs of the children.

Chief Minister orders revision of stray dog policy

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, taking notice of the inhumane killing of stray dogs, has directed concerned authorities to review the current policy on their extermination. He instructed the Municipal and Livestock Departments to develop an alternative policy. A communication from the Chief Minister's Secretariat to the relevant departments highlights the ineffectiveness and cruelty of the current approach. The directive emphasizes the need for collaboration among departments to devise and implement a humane alternative promptly. The new policy will focus on TNR principles (Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Return).

Ministers, former NA Speaker inspect health projects in Swabi

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Minister for Irrigation Aaqibullah, and former Speaker of the National Assembly Asad Qaiser on Wednesday visited Swabi to inspect ongoing health infrastructure projects. Accompanied by Special Secretary Health Habibullah, Chief Planning Officer Qaiser Alam, DG Health Dr. Shaukat Ali, Director Public Health Dr. Arshad Roghani, and other officials, the ministers visited the under-construction building of Women and Children Hospital in Swabi. During the briefing, Director General Health Services Dr. Shaukat Ali informed that the project would incur a cost of 3.8 billion rupees, with 236 million rupees allocated for the current financial year. The hospital, comprising 260 beds, is being constructed on a 46 kanal land allocated for it. 55% of the construction work has been completed and with funds available, the hospital is expected to be fully operational by June 2025. Additionally, Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Irrigation Minister Aaqibullah, and former Speaker of the National Assembly also visited the District Headquarters Hospital in Swabi. They were welcomed by MS Noor Alam, who briefed them about the ongoing construction of a new hospital building to replace the dilapidated one.

ANF recovers 30 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 30 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from a parcel booked for Lahore in TCS office Rawalpindi. 1,943 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel sent from Thailand at a courier office in Rawalpindi. 85 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport. 13 kg heroin, 9 kg hashish, and 980 grams Ice were recovered from the possession of two accused arrested from Makran Coastal Highway Hub.

Punjab Police sign MoU for higher technical education of children of martyrs, employees

Independent Report
LAHORE: Inspector General Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has taken another good measure for the higher technical education of children of martyrs and employees of Punjab Police. An MoU was signed between the Punjab Police and a private college (Shamim Ramzan College of Health Sciences). Under which the children of police employees will get better opportunities for higher education. According to the details, IG Punjab and CEO College Shahid Rasool signed the MoU at the ceremony held at the Central Police Office here on Wednesday. Under the MOU, children of police martyrs will be given specialized degrees/courses in pharmacy technician, dispenser, medical lab technology, operation theater technology and radiology & imaging technology absolutely free, whereas children of in-service employees are given 50% discount in all course fees. Police employees will avail these educational scholarships in five colleges located in Vehari, Okara, Jhang, Arifwala and Shorkot. The IG Punjab thanked the private college for its support in skills-based degree programs and courses. He said that with this initiative, the children of police employees will be able to get respectable employment by obtaining degrees.



MUZAFFARABAD: Women from far-flung rural areas queue up outside the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) office to receive money in the warm, sunny month of Ramadan, waiting for their turn.

Commissioner Mardan for ensuring safety to people lives, property

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Intelligence Coordination meeting at his office. Additional Commissioner Naem Akhtar, Regional Police Officer Najibur Rahman Bagwi, Deputy Commissioner Swabi Dr. Tariqullah, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Saeedullah Jan, ADCs Shah Zaib and Gohar Ali, officers of security agencies, ANF and other concerned officials attended the meeting. He was addressing the Divisional

International News

Ukraine's survival in danger, warns Pentagon chief

Monitoring Desk
RAMSTEIN BASE: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday warned that Ukraine's survival was in danger and sought to convince allies that the United States was committed to Kyiv, even as Washington has essentially run out of money to continue arming Ukrainian forces. Republican House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson has so far refused to call a vote on a bill that would provide \$60 billion more for Ukraine and the White House has been scrambling to find ways to send assistance to Kyiv, which has been battling Russian forces for more than two years. Austin is leading the monthly meeting known as

the Ukraine defence contact group (UDCG), held at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, of about 50 allies that have been militarily supporting Ukraine. "Ukraine's survival is in danger," Austin said in a press conference after the meeting. "Our allies and partners continue to step up, the United States must also," he added. Austin, who is traveling for the first time this year since prostate cancer treatment, did not say how Washington would support Ukraine without additional funding. Officials say the lack of funding available is already having an impact on the ground in Ukraine and Ukrainian forces are having to manage scarce resources. "I think our allies are



Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres looks on during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council at U.N. headquarters on the maintenance of International Peace and Security Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in New York City, US.

UN chief invokes film, warns of nuclear disaster

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres invoked Oscar-winning film Oppenheimer on Monday as he warned that the world faced the highest risk of nuclear war in decades. At a Security Council session called by Japan, Guterres said that the biopic about the morally conflicted father of the atomic bomb "brought the harsh reality of nuclear doomsday to vivid life for millions around the world." "Humanity cannot survive a sequel to Oppenheimer," Guterres said. "We meet at a time when geopolitical tensions and mistrust have escalated the risk of nuclear warfare to its highest point in decades," he said. Russian President Vladimir Putin has made thinly veiled threats to use nuclear weapons as he



Palestinians gather to receive free food, even as Gaza residents face alarming levels of hunger during the month of Ramazan.

Moldovan president launches campaign to promote EU referendum

Monitoring Desk
CHISINAU: President Maia Sandu launched a campaign to promote an upcoming referendum on Moldova's push to join the European Union on Monday, calling on civil leaders to rally support for the country's accession to the 27-member bloc. Moldova, a former Soviet republic of 2.6 million led by a pro-European government, applied for EU membership in 2022 and received a draft framework for accession negotiations in March, along with neighbouring Ukraine. The country's relations with Russia have become strained since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which Chisinau has staunchly condemned. Sandu announced plans in December to hold a referendum later this year on whether to join the EU.

Putin to visit China in May for talks with Xi

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: Russian President Vladimir Putin will travel to China in May for talks with Xi Jinping, in what could be the Kremlin chief's first overseas trip of his new presidential term, according to five sources familiar with the matter. Western governments on Monday condemned Putin's re-election as unfair and undemocratic. But China, India and North Korea congratulated the veteran leader on extending his rule by a further six years, highlighting geopolitical fault lines that have widened since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. "Putin will visit China," one of the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters. The details were independently confirmed by four other sources, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. Another of the sources said Putin's trip to China would probably take place in the second half of May. Two of the sources said the Putin visit would come before Xi's planned trip to Europe. The Kremlin, when asked about the Reuters report, said information on Putin's visits would be released closer to the date.

Clans step in to protect Gaza aid

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Armed and masked men from an array of clans and factions have started providing security to aid convoys in Gaza, Palestinian officials and sources in the Hamas group say. Video footage obtained by Reuters showed a convoy of trucks entering Gaza City with foreign aid overnight, watched by several men armed with AK-47 assault rifles and others wielding sticks. With Israeli forces sworn to eliminating Hamas since its deadly Oct 7 raid on Israel.

Armenia's PM says he must return disputed areas to Azerbaijan or face war

Monitoring Desk
TBILISI: Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that Armenia may face a war with Azerbaijan if it does not compromise with Baku on returning some strategic Azerbaijani territories that Armenia has controlled since the early 1990s. Pashinyan was speaking during a Monday meeting with residents of border areas in northern Armenia's Tavush region, close to a string of deserted Azerbaijani villages that Yerevan has controlled since the opening phases of the countries' three-decade-long conflict in the early 1990s. TASS quoted Pashinyan as saying in a video of the meeting circulated by his government: "Now we can leave here, let's go and tell [Azerbaijan] that no, we are not going to do anything. This means that at the end of the week a war will begin." Pashinyan has repeatedly signalled in recent weeks that he is willing to return the villages to Azerbaijan.

Israeli strikes target 'Hezbollah' inside Syria

Monitoring Desk
AMMAN: Israel launched missiles at several military targets outside the Syrian capital Damascus on Tuesday, Syria's defence ministry said, in what regional intelligence and Syrian sources said were stepped up strikes on fortifications of Hezbollah. Syrian air defences intercepted Israeli "missiles and shot down some of them", the ministry said in a statement, adding they caused only material damage.

Blinken lauds 'extraordinary' expansion of defence ties with Philippines

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hailed on Tuesday a recent strengthening of defence ties with the Philippines as "extraordinary", saying they would only grow further, though Washington's expanding alliances were not aimed at China. Speaking during a visit to the Philippines, Blinken said China's actions in the South China Sea had triggered a wider international reaction, and the United States was engaged in intense diplomacy to reaffirm international law. "We have a shared concern about (China's) actions that threaten our common vision for a free open Indo-Pacific, including in the South China Sea and in the Philippines exclusive economic zone (EEZ)," Blinken told a press conference alongside his Philippine counterpart. Ties between the Philippines and China have soured amid repeated spats over disputed features in the Philippine's exclusive economic zone, and Manila has accused China's coastguard of a policy of aggression. Beijing, which claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, has maintained Philippine vessels are intruding in its territory. China's foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian on Tuesday said the United States had no right to interfere in disputes between Manila and Beijing and China would take the necessary actions to defend its territory. "Military cooperation between the United States and the Philippines should not harm China's sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea, let alone be used to prop up the Philippines' illegal position."

PM directs formulation of constitutional, legal amendments package for judicial reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the special committee concerned to formulate a package of constitutional and legal reforms to bring in judicial reforms in the country.

The prime minister, chairing the maiden meeting of the special committee on legal and judicial reforms, also instructed the committee to formulate a strategy to simplify the civil and criminal laws for ease of the common man.

The committee comprises Law Minister Azam

Nazeem Tarar, President of Supreme Court Bar Association Shehzad Shaukat, representative of Pakistan Bar Council Ahsan Bhoon, former Law Minister Zahid Hamid, senior legal expert Shahid Hamid and Attorney General Mansoor Awan, a PM Office press release said.

Expressing his desire to provide quick and easy justice to the common man, the prime minister called for easing the taxation matters for the people, particularly the business community.

He asked the commit-

tee to put forward its legal proposals to ensure effective recovery of taxes.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that pending tax recoveries worth Rs2400 billion due to the court or tribunals' orders was a matter of concern. He also sought an interim report within two weeks on the financial and tax matters.

He instructed that the report to be presented by the committee should be forwarded to the relevant ministries for implementation, after consultation with the coalition partners.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the legal reforms committee.

Supreme Court accepts bail pleas of five suspects in May 9 violence case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday accepted the bail applications of five suspects in a May 9 violence case.

The suspects had been taken into custody for attacking Hamza Camp in Rawalpindi and damaging it.

A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Jamal Mandokhel, granted bails to Saifullah, Awaiz Ayyaz, Kamran, Waqas and Nasrullah in lieu of surety bonds of Rs50,000 each.

During the hearing, the court admonished the police and the prosecution for faulty investigation.

Justice Mandokhel asked whether being a worker of a party or taking out a rally was a crime. "The state of affairs we are witnessing today is the consequence of banning students' unions and political parties," the judge said, adding, "Can we declare a former prime minister 'traitor' merely on

the basis of a statement given by a head constable?"

"Fear The Almighty Allah. Where are we heading?" he wondered.

Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi asked what were the proofs against the suspects? "Had their faces been recognized through CCTV camera footages?"

The investigation officer (IO) told the court that the protestors who had attacked the Hamza Camp and government buildings had broken the cameras installed in these areas.

Justice Mandokhel remarked that meant there was no proof against the suspects and these were merely statements given by the police officials on which the prosecution was relying upon. "Why terrorism-related sections were inserted in the case," he asked.

Speaking on the occasion, counsel for the Punjab government said that the suspects had attacked the ISI Camp.

Improving economy leads IMF to strike staff-level agreement with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reached a staff level agreement on the second and final review under Stand by arrangement.

This came during meetings between Pakistani authorities and the IMF team led by Nathan Porter in Islamabad.

Pakistan will receive 1.1 billion dollars after approval from the IMF's Executive Board.

In his statement following talks, Nathan Porter said Pakistan's economic and financial position has improved in the months since the first review, with growth and confidence continuing to recover on the back of prudent policy management and the resumption of inflows from multilateral and bilateral partners.

Pirzada says: Lawyers rights to be protected at all costs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Association (SCBA) Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada has acknowledged the pivotal role played by the lawyers and reiterated the commitment to protect their rights at all costs.

Chairing a high level meeting regarding Park Road Housing Scheme, Islamabad, a project of Federal Government Employees Housing Authority and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), he assured that he was not only aware of the issues but also stand committed to ensure that pace of work is accelerated and the project is completed on time.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, President Supreme Court Bar

Association (SCBA) Shahzad Shaukat, Secretary SCBA1 Syed Ali Imran and Ahsan Bhoon also attended the meeting along with senior office holders of SCBA.

During the meeting, Director General FGEHA Capt. @ Muhammad Zafar Iqbal provided an update on the project's infrastructural development.

Both sides exchanged views regarding the progress of the project and also addressed pertinent matters and issues.

Azam Tarar and Ahsan Bhoon apprised the Housing Minister and Secretary Housing about the concerns and issues of lawyer's community and SCBA related to the project and demanded to speed up the pace of work.

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner H.E. Jane Marriott called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Inquiry ordered into mine mishap: 12 coalmine labourers dead; 8 rescue alive in Harnai coalmine mishap

Independent Report

QUETTA: As many as 12 coalmine labourers died while eight others were rescued after a coalmine caved in following the gas explosion in Harnai coalmine field on late Tuesday night.

The Chief Mines Inspector Balochistan, Abdul Ghani told that some 12 coal mine workers were trapped in a coalmine located in Zard Aalo area of Harnai after the blast occurred there.

After the mishap, eight other local coal mine workers entered the coal mine to rescue the trapped miners. However, they were also trapped after the mine caved in.

Later, the rescue teams including Provincial Disaster Management Authority and Mines department reached the spot and started rescue operation.

During the course, eight coal mine workers, who had entered the affected mine for rescue, were rescued alive and shifted to the local health establishment.

However, 12 other mine workers could not survive and their bodies were taken out from the coal mine.

The deceased workers hailed from Pishin, Chaman, Harnai, Killa Saifullah and Quetta.

The Chief Mines Inspector informed that the affected coal mine has been sealed after completion of the rescue operation.

He said that an inquiry has also been ordered to probe into the coal mine mishap. Meanwhile, bodies of deceased coal mine workers were sent to their native areas for burial. It may be mentioned here that Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti had directed the DG PDMA to dispatch rescue teams to the Harnai coalmine area.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner H.E. Jane Marriott called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui chairs a meeting wherein he was briefed by officials of the Ministry of Federal Education regarding various programs and projects aimed at advancing education in Pakistan.

PM for early conclusion of Pak-UK Enhanced Strategic Partnership agreement

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing the desire to elevate the Pakistan-UK relationship to the next level, emphasized the importance of early conclusion of the Enhanced Strategic Partnership (ESP) agreement.

The prime minister, in a meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, who called on him, highlighted the government's priorities, in particular the importance of navigating through the economic challenges facing the country, a PM Office press release said.

In this regard, he underscored the need to enhance bilateral cooperation in trade and investment, climate, and people-to-people contacts as well as developing convergences on regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

and Foreign Secretary Lord David Cameron for their messages of felicitation on his re-election and said that he looked forward to working closely with the UK leadership to further strengthen bilateral relations. He said Pakistan and the UK had longstanding, historic relations and shared immense political goodwill while cooperating closely over a wide range of areas.

The prime minister called for the early resumption of PIA flights between Pakistan and the UK to help strengthen linkages between the two countries and assuage concerns of the 1.6 million strong Pakistani diaspora in the UK.

He requested the high commissioner to convey his best wishes to King Charles III and prayed for his early recovery to full health. The prime minister also expressed the hope that the King would visit Pakistan, as soon as his health permitted him to travel.

Nomination papers of Swati, Khurram, Murad for Senate election in KP rejected

PESHAWAR (Online): Nomination papers of Azam Swati, Murad Saeed and Khurram Zeeshan for Senate election have been rejected in KP.

The nomination papers of Faisal Javed, Noor ul Haq Qadri and Azhar Mashwani have been accepted.

The Returning Officer (RO) issued list after scrutiny. The list was issued following the completion of scrutiny process for Senate polls on 7 general seats, 2 women and 2 technocrats seats.

As many as 25 candidates had filed nomination papers against 7 general seats and papers were accepted in respect of 16 candidates. The papers of remaining 9 candidates were rejected.

The papers have been rejected in respect of the candidates including Murad Saeed, Khurram Zeeshan and former chief minister KP Mehmood Khan.

LAHORE: Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazir presiding over an important at PMU.

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has emphasized establishing a culture of self-accountability across all institutions, including the Health Department.

Chairing a meeting on Wednesday, he highlighted the importance of clean character and vowed severe punishment for those involved in stealing medicines from hospitals.

During the meeting held at the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education, Salman Rafique expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve the health department once again, emphasizing government's commitment to serving people. He noted the upcoming construction of a state-of-the-art cancer hospital in Lahore and pledged to improve emergency services.

LAHORE: Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazir presiding over an important at PMU.

Salman advocates self-accountability, reform in health sector

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AIOU starts mailing of books

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has begun dispatching books to 60,000 students who are enrolled in the matriculation program for Semester Spring 2024.

According to Director Admissions AIOU, the process of dispatching books to matric program students will be completed by the end of this week.

Additionally, the process of delivering books to 80,000 students enrolled in FA will commence next week.

To ensure that all academic tasks are completed within the specified timeframe and to avoid any complaints from students, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has strictly instructed all departments to follow the academic calendar.

This is the first time in the university's history that semester admissions are underway, and the delivery process of books to students has already begun.

Punjab CM chairs meeting on 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, during a meeting here on Wednesday, reviewed the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project under which 100,000 housing units would be constructed for the low-income people.

The CM said that home is the basic need of every family, and 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project would fulfill the very basic need of low-income groups. She ordered to urgently complete the site selection process in six major cities of Punjab for the purpose. These cities include Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Sargodha and Rawalpindi.

The chief minister ordered for selecting sites keeping in view all basic amenities. If spaces available, construct these houses in city centres; otherwise choose the nearest places to ensure public convenience, adding that Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar project would be a landmark success, where people would get all the facilities to live happily.

The chief minister was briefed that the Board of Revenue has identified 117 sites across Punjab, which will be inspected and finalised immediately.

LAHORE: Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazir presiding over an important at PMU.

Norwegian Ambassador commends PRCS humanitarian efforts

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Mr. Per Albert Isaas commended the strides made by PRCS under Chairman Laghari's guidance, noting the organization's remarkable countrywide program outreach and robust volunteer base;

Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari commended Ambassador Isaas for his genuine concern for Pakistan's people and emphasized the visit's potential to strengthen ties between both countries, not only in humanitarian efforts but also in exploring areas of collaboration beyond diplomacy.

[Islamabad, 18th March 2024]- The Ambassador of Norway to Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Per Albert Isaas, met with Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) at the PRCS National Headquarters here on Monday. During the meeting, Ambassador Isaas emphasized the crucial role of humanitarian service, expressing a shared dedication to advancing such efforts in Pakistan.

Ambassador Per Albert Isaas commended PRCS's pivotal role in alleviating the suffering of vulnerable communities. The meeting delved into various topics including bilateral relations, the programs and initiatives supported by the Norwegian Red Cross and the imperative of enhancing cooperation for the betterment of humanity.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Mr. Per Albert Isaas commended the strides made by PRCS under Chairman Laghari's guidance, noting the organization's remarkable countrywide program outreach and robust volunteer base;

19 outlaws held, narcotics, weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 19 outlaws including five professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered stolen motorbike, narcotics, weapons from their possession.

On the instruction of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminals in order to eliminate the crime from the city, a public relations officer said on Wednesday. As per the details, the Golra police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Faisal and Gul Rehman, recovered two 30 bore pistols from their possession.

Security measures bolster for foreign nationals residing in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: According to details, the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan presided over an important security meeting, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the meeting was attended by senior police officers of Islamabad Capital Police. On the occasion a request has been made for the recruitment of 1000 personnel to ensure the safety of life and property of foreign nationals residing in the federal capital Islamabad.

Additionally, the Special Protection Unit will be restructured on modern parameters for the security of Chinese citizens. Maintaining peace and security and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens of Islamabad are among the top priorities of Islamabad Capital Police.

Islamabad Capital Police is utilizing all available resources to make the city a bastion of peace. Citizens are urged to report any suspicious individuals or activities to their respective police station, emergency helpline "Pucar-15", or at "ICT-15" app.

CDA starts anti encroachment drive in federal capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Anti-encroachment operations are being conducted across the city on the instructions of the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) so that the land of Islamabad could be kept free from illegal constructions and encroachments.

These operations are being carried out by the Enforcement Directorate with the support of the district administration and Islamabad police.

According to the details, these operations were conducted on Islamabad Highway, Sector G-9, I-11, I-9 including Bari Imam, and Khanna Pull, where several encroachments and illegal constructions were demolished and the government land was retrieved.

The anti-encroachment operation was started from Islamabad Highway and Khanna Pull, where dozens of fruit stalls were removed and the road was cleared from both sides.

Special Traffic education and enforcement drive in full swing

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police took prompt action against underage motorcycle riders and drivers and

City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police launched a special traffic education and

is underway against underage bikers, those involved in rash driving and violating traffic rules. Under the supervision of chief traffic officer Islamabad, zonal DSP's are ensuring strict action against those violating traffic rules. In this regard, Islamabad capital police already formed special squads to set up special roadblocks in major highways and squares of Islamabad in order to take strict legal action against underage drivers and other traffic rule violators.

Pamphlets and leaflets are being distributed to create awareness among citizens. While various teams of the education wing are spreading awareness about road safety rules among the road users.



imposed fines on them under the campaign of Special Traffic education and enforcement.

Following the directions of Islamabad Capital

enforcement campaign in order to solve the traffic related problems faced by the citizens on roads, a public relations officer said.

He said that, campaign