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LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Mines and Minerals of Balochistan with special context to Reko Dik Project.

Foolproof security of Reko Diq project personnel, logistics must be ensured: PM

A strategy should be formed for the feasibility of a rail and road network from Reko Diq to Gwadar port

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday directed that security should be ensured for those working on the Reko Diq mining project and for the logistics and transport from Reko Diq to the Gwadar seaport.

He was chairing an important meeting regarding the Reko Diq mining project.

A delegation of Barrick Gold company led by its Chief Executive Officer Mark Bristow took part in the meeting through video link.

The PM said consultations should be held with all stakeholders regarding the project at the official level and all the obstacles should be removed.

He said planning should be initiated for improvement in the communication infrastructure especially railway lines for utilising the minerals of Balochistan, adding work for the upgradation of the road network to link Reko Diq project with Gwadar port by road, should be completed at the earliest.

Wherever new roads were being constructed, the pace of construction should be increased, he remarked.

The PM said a strategy should be formed for the feasibility of a rail and road network from Reko Diq to Gwadar port.

He said the railway line project from Reko Diq to Gwadar would make access to the port short and easy and as compared to Bin Qasim port the distance would also be less.

The new railway line would be beneficial for the mineral-rich district of Chaghi and the mining industry would expand, he added. He sought a detailed briefing next week on the Reko Diq road and rail connectivity project.

He also instructed that all hurdles should be removed at the official level for early completion of the environment and social impact assessment regarding the Reko Diq project.

During the meeting, it was told that the feasibility of the Reko Diq project would be completed by December 2024.

President confers military awards upon officers of Pakistan Armed Forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday conferred insignias of military awards upon 42 officers of Pakistan armed forces.

The Presidential Investiture ceremony was held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr in connection with Pakistan Day and was attended by senior officers of Pakistan armed forces, government officials and families of the recipients of the awards.

The recipients of Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) included Lt. Gen. Mohsin Muhammad Qureshi, Air Marshal Abdul Moeed Khan, Air Marshal Tariq Zia, Air Marshal Ghulam Abbas Ghuman, Major Gen. Shoaib Ahmed, Major Gen. Naseer Ahmed Samore, Rear Admiral Habibur Rehman, Major Gen. Shazia Nisar, Major Gen. Ejaz Ghani, Major Gen. Nadeem Ahmed Rana, Major Gen. Waseem Ahmad Khan, Major Gen. Arshad Naseem, Rear Admiral Syed Ahmed Salman, Major Gen. Arshad Mehmood, Major Gen. Muhammad Atif Mansha, Major Gen. Javed Dost Chandio, Major Gen. Muhammad Irfan Khan, Major General Syed Asif Hussain, Major Gen. Sheheryar Parvez Butt, Air Vice Marshal Zaffar Aslam, Major Gen. Imranullah, Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, Major Gen. Muhammad Raza Aizad, Major General Muhammad Ishaq Khattak, Major Gen. Ch. Amin Ajmal, Major Gen. Jawwad Ahmed Qazi, Major Gen. Ahmad Bilal, Major Gen. Iftikhar Hassan Chaudhry, Major Gen. Ehsan Ali, Major Gen. Kamran Nazir Malik, Major Gen. Wajid Aziz, Major Gen. Muhammad Umer Bashir, Major Gen. Asad ur Rehman Afzal Cheema, Major Gen. Mushtaq Ali, Major Gen. Muhammad Imtanan Babar, Major Gen. Muhammad Farhan Yousaf, Rear Admiral Syed Faisal Ali Shah, Major Gen. Ahsan Altaf and Major Gen. Abeena Choudhry. The president also conferred Sitara-i-Basalat (posthumous) upon Captain Abdul Wali Shaheed, who embraced martyrdom during an operation against terrorists in North Waziristan.

PM Shehbaz reconstitutes ECC with Aurangzeb as its chairman

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif reconstituted the federal cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), ARY News reported.

Earlier, Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif formed a steering committee for reforms and automation in Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR). As per details, PM Shehbaz will be chairman of the 10-member steering committee and a formal notification has also been issued in this regard.

The Federal Ministers of Finance, Industry, Commerce and Production, and Law will be members of the high profile committee.

The Finance Division will provide Secretarial support to the Steering Committee, which will monitor the implementation of the FBR reform plan.

According to the official notification, the Economic Coordination Committee has been reconstituted and Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb was appointed as its chairman.

The notification stated that the finance minister will head the panel with the four other ministers including economic affairs, commerce, power, petroleum, and planning, development and special initiatives, notified as its members.

It is pertinent to mention here that before the reconstitution of the ECC,

Pakistan mulling over resuming trade with India, says Ishaq Dar

LONDON (INP): Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar hinted at Pakistan mulling over trade relations with India.

He was talking to media in London after his participation in the Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels. Ishaq Dar, a former finance minister of Pakistan, remarked that the trade with India via Dubai and Singapore has been much expensive.

Trade relations with India were suspended since India's controversial move to revoke the special autonomous status of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019. He said Pakistan's business class was eager for restoration of direct trade with India. "We will take a decision after consultations with all stakeholders," he added.

He said the government would implement a five-year road map to put Pakistan on the road of economic progress and bring down inflation to lessen economic difficulties of the common man. He said the 16-month government of Shehbaz Sharif saved Pakistan from economic collapse after the bad policies of the previous government which devastated economy of the country. He said Pakistan had vision for nuclear energy since 1960s and despite the scrutiny of the world it continued to harness the benefits of nuclear energy. "Now the world is saying that nuclear and hydro energy are the safest and best for taking on the challenge of climate change."



Govt. facilitated masses with Rs 12.5bln Ramadan subsidy: Ahsan Iqbal

NAROWAL (APP): Federal Minister for Planning Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday said the government had given Rs 12.5 billion subsidy to general public during the month of Ramadan, with ample stock of edibles items available at Utility Stores.

Talking to media during his visit to a Utility Store in Narowal, he said flour, ghee, sugar and other items were available at cheaper prices to facilitate the consumers. Iqbal said Pakistan was facing economic challenges and bearing the brunt of heavy loans. This is a vicious cycle of loans which consumes a big chunk of revenue collected from taxes, he added.

He regretted that the government of Imran Khan during his four-year tenure incurred immense damage to the country. The heavy price for his incompetence is now being paid by the entire nation in form of financial constraints and inflation, he added.

Iqbal vowed that in next two years, the present government's reforms would yield results and would help the country gain economic momentum.

He said economic stability would help the government to give subsidy on fuel and mentioned that the prices of petrol and diesel were subject to the international market rates.

KSA, Pakistan discuss ways to further strength bilateral ties: Prince Khalid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defence Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on Sunday said that he met with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and reviewed robust relations between the two countries and ways to bolster them. In his X account, he said "We also discussed recent regional and international developments and efforts to promote peace."

He also conveyed the greetings of Saudi leadership.

PM wishes speedy recovery of King Charles, Princess Catherine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday wished for the full and speedy recovery of British King Charles III and Princess Catherine.

"The Royal Family is widely respected & revered in Pakistan. We stand with them in these difficult times," the prime minister posted on X.

PTI denied permission to hold March 30 rally due to security reasons

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad district administration on Sunday finally refused to grant Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) permission to hold a public rally against alleged rigging during the February 8 general elections, post-poll result manipulations, and "deviation from the Constitution" in Islamabad on March 30, citing security reasons.

The development came before the expiry of a two-day deadline set by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) for the district administration to make a decision on the Imran Khan-founded party's plea seeking permission to hold a public gathering in Islamabad in end-March.

The former ruling party had moved the court alleging that the capital city administration was unresponsive to their request and sought its order in this regard.

In a statement, PTI regional president Aamir Masood Mughal confirmed the report and announced that his party would again approach the IHC.

Pak-Afghan Torkham border reopened

TORKHAM (INP): Pak-Afghan Torkham border has been restored for crossing after three hours. According to border security sources, passengers' crossing from both sides of the border has been continued.

The border was suspended due to dispute between Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and security forces, sources said. The channel report said the traffic on the border was suspended for three hours today morning.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia stand proudly together at all times: PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has stated that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia stand proudly together at all times and on all occasions.

In a tweet, he recalled his meeting with Minister for Defence of Saudi Arabia Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud who was Guest of honour at the Pakistan Day parade in Islamabad.

The Prime Minister expressed his delight over meeting the visiting Saudi dignitary and said he conveyed his warm wishes to the Saudi King and Crown Prince.

Shehbaz Sharif said he also congratulated the Saudi Defence Minister on receiving Pakistan's highest civil award 'Nishan-e-Imtiaz' for his invaluable contribution in strengthening Pak-Saudi fraternal ties.

CM Maryam calls for strict action against kite-flying ban violator

Orders to launch a crackdown on the making, selling and buying of a chemical string

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz has ordered to launch a crackdown on the making, selling and buying of a chemical string. CM presided over a high-level meeting in which law and order situation of the province was reviewed. IG Police gave a briefing about the law and order situation. CM sought a report on the crime situation on a daily basis and directed to submit a report after evaluating performance of the police officers. Maryam Nawaz ordered to adopt a zero tolerance policy about the chemical string.

CM ordered to undertake immediate action to ensure implementation on the law to stop open display of arms. It was agreed to formulate a foolproof mechanism for the drug peddling during the meeting. Maryam Nawaz directed to frame cases with an irrefutable evidence against the big drug-peddlers adding that the need to formulate a legal mechanism in order to check the online supply of drugs in the educational institutions should be reviewed.

CM stated that the permission to establish no-go areas anywhere in Punjab will not be granted. She expressed her concern over the frequent occurrence of kite flying incidents and stated that she felt heartily grieved over witnessing the video of the deceased child due to chemical kite string adding that the lives of the parents of the innocent child got ruined as well. CM maintained that a law exists for the eradication of kite flying but even then people are loosing their lives.

There is a need to undertake steps on a war footing to ensure implementation of the prohibition of kite flying law. Mere registering a case is inadequate, the accused must also be punished. CM directed to undertake a stern action for the reduction in the molestation cases. The accused should be awarded strict punishment in the molestation cases. The unending torture incidents of children, servants and domestic violence is highly deplorable. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Former Senator Pervaiz Rasheed, Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari, Special Assistant Zeeshan Malik, MPA Sania Ashiq, Chief Secretary, IG Police, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, CCPO and Advocate General attended the meeting. Secretary Home, Divisional Commissioners, RPOs, Deputy Commissioners, DPOs participated in the meeting via video link.



SIALKOT: Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif addressing the welcome iftar dinner by University of Sialkot Chairman Faisal Manzoor Malik.

Govt crackdown on power distribution companies' resorting to overbilling begins

ISLAMABAD (INP): On the order of Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, a crackdown on those charging extra units in electricity bills from both government and private consumers has been launched.

In this connection, a notification was issued on Sunday, while teams, consisting of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officials, have already been constituted for the purpose.

Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Manager Anwar Wattoo has been appointed as the focal person.

After government power connections, the connections of private consumers will also be checked for overbilling.

The FIA teams will compile reports after checking connections of the consumers.

And in the light of these reports, it will be estimated how many extra units have been charged.

Legal action will also be taken against the officers and other employees resorting to overbilling.

Earlier, the interior minister had ordered action against power thieves.

CDA imposes heavy taxes on properties in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) has imposed heavy taxes on real estate properties in federal capital Islamabad. According to notification, owners of 140 square yards plots in sectors and housing societies like Shehzad Town, Margala Town, and Rawal Town will now pay Rs24,000 in taxes. Farmhouse owners with eight kanals will pay Rs180,000, while those with 90 to 120 kanals will pay Rs442,000. Commercial properties in the blue area will be taxed at Rs32 per square foot for ground floor, Rs22 per square foot for basement.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz presiding over a high-level meeting to review law and order situation

Moscow carnage

The monstrous terrorist attack targeting a concert hall near Moscow on Friday night should alert the international community to the threat the self-styled Islamic State's Khorasan chapter poses to global security.

While the 'original' IS may have been largely defeated in the battlefields of Iraq and Syria, IS-K is proving itself to be a 'worthy' successor to its parent outfit's blood-soaked legacy. Over 140 people were mowed down in the Moscow attack, which IS-K has claimed, while Russian authorities say several suspects, including some of the attackers, have been apprehended. While Russian intelligence agencies claim the perpetrators have links to Ukraine, Kyiv has denied this. IS-K, believed to be operating out of Afghanistan, has been slowly building its profile. It has staged several attacks in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. In January, it bombed the commemoration ceremony of Iranian Gen Qassem Soleimani in Kerman, causing a high number of fatalities.

With the Moscow attack, the terrorist group seems to be expanding its geographical scope. Russia had in decades past dealt with religiously inspired militancy, including in Chechnya and Dagestan. In more recent times, Vladimir Putin's forces intervened to turn the tide in favour of Syrian forces fighting both their political opponents and jihadists. Moreover, thousands of Russian — Chechens and others — jihadists had fought against Bashar al-Assad's regime during the Syrian civil war. Now that the Syrian front is largely quiet, these militants, under the IS-K flag, may have decided to take their fight to Russia proper to avenge their defeat. Just as it took a multinational effort to defeat IS, a similar endeavour will be needed to destroy IS-K before it spreads its deadly wings any further. This will require the international community to closely coordinate with the Afghan Taliban, whom IS-K opposes. Afghanistan, and those states that border it, particularly Pakistan, need to be in the forefront of the fight against the Khorasan faction, as these countries are the most vulnerable to IS-K's bloody forays. Iran, the Central Asian states, China and Russia should also be on board to contain the regional threat, and neutralise it.

Moreover, the Taliban need to understand that letting militants operate on their soil — including TTP terrorists — will jeopardise the security of their own country, as well as that of the greater region. Counterterrorism assistance should be extended by foreign states to the de facto Afghan regime in the fight against IS-K, TTP and others. Pakistan has reiterated the need for collective efforts. Also, further investigation is needed to probe Moscow's claims of state support for IS-K. Needless to say, supporting such bloodthirsty actors would be a folly of monumental proportions. Some foreign actors made similar mistakes in Syria by financing and arming anti-Assad extremists. Such dubious manoeuvres should not be repeated.

Ramifications of Terrorist Attack in Russia on Pakistan

By Qamar Bashir

Press Secretary to the President(Rtd); Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



The devastating attack on a music concert in Moscow, Russia, resulting in the tragic loss of over 133 lives, sent shockwaves reverberating across the globe. This heinous act has deeply wounded the collective spirit of the Russian nation and stirred anguish among people worldwide. The brazen assault on innocent concertgoers, unprecedented in Moscow, strikes at the heart of a city known for its robust security measures, fortified by Russia's formidable security apparatus and renowned intelligence agency, the KGB.

This time, it appears that the attackers managed to breach the legendary security of Moscow, the capital city of one of the world's most powerful nations. This breach may have occurred due to various factors, including intelligence failures, potential inside collusion, or complacency within the security apparatus. Alternatively, the perpetrators might have been exceptionally well-prepared, possessing high levels of skill, resources, and connections both inside and outside the country. These factors likely facilitated their undetected entry into Russia, circumventing border security measures. Once inside, they could have arranged transportation, acquired funds, weapons, and even con-

cert tickets with ease. This enabled them to carry out their heinous act, indiscriminately firing upon concertgoers, resulting in the tragic loss of over 133 lives, and later setting fire to the venue.

The four terrorists were apprehended along with eleven accomplices; their confessional videos are available on social media platforms. It's possible that they were not as ready to leave as they were to enter Russia. The US quickly announced that ISIS, specifically the ISIS Khurasani Group, or ISIS-K, was behind the attack. They claimed that Russian intelligence had been tipped off by the US about an impending terrorist strike in Moscow, but they dismissed the information as a false flag.

Vladimir Putin disputed the US's claim that ISIS was to blame, placing the responsibility instead on Ukraine, the West, and the US and all those countries which have been supporting Ukraine against Russia.

He also warned that anyone who planned, encouraged, assisted, supported, or funded this heinous act would face consequences, but the way he intended to carry out that punishment would send shockwaves around the globe.

The vows made by Putin have put Ukraine, the entire West, and the US on edge. Unlike weaker and less resourceful countries like Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Syria, Iran and Afghanistan, or Pakistan, the US and the West now facing Russia possess a formidable war machine. It

boasts a highly trained and battle-hardened army, a feared intelligence agency in the form of the KGB, and nuclear capabilities that could devastate the world multiple times over. As a member of OPEC, Russia stands as one of the top exporters of oil, petroleum products, wheat, and other essential crops, as well as industrial products, weapons, and weapons systems. Its self-sufficiency in food, industrial goods, military hardware, and energy makes Russia one of the most secure countries in the world.

To counter any potential Russian attempts to retaliate against those it accuses of masterminding the attack, the US, Ukraine, and Western countries have started mulling on ways and means to defuse Russian anger and putting all safety and defense mechanism in place to minimize the impact of imminent Russian attempt to take revenge of the attack from perceived masterminds, abettors and facilitators.

They are fiercely engaged in diplomatic dialogue with Russia to de-escalate tensions and prevent further escalation of the situation involving direct negotiations, diplomatic channels through international organizations such as the United Nations, and diplomatic initiatives led by neutral parties.

They are thinking of building a coalition of international allies to demonstrate solidarity and support for Ukraine and rallying support from NATO allies, European Union member states, and other coun-

tries sharing similar concerns about Russian impending actions.

They are mulling over ways and means to maintaining a strong military presence in the region to deter potential Russian aggression and respond effectively to any hostile actions involving deploying additional troops, conducting military exercises, and enhancing defense capabilities to ensure readiness to defend against any threats, besides, intensifying intelligence-sharing mechanisms among allied countries to gather information on Russian intentions and activities involving sharing intelligence on potential threats, monitoring Russian military movements, and coordinating efforts to counter any hostile actions.

Moreover, to deter Russia from taking retaliatory actions, they are lining up targeted economic sanctions against Russia if it escalates tensions or takes aggressive actions against Ukraine or other countries. This could involve imposing sanctions on key Russian individuals, entities, and sectors, as well as restricting trade and financial transactions to exert economic pressure on Russia.

Strengthen cyber defense capabilities to protect against potential Russian cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure, government institutions, and private sector entities may also be on the cards. This could involve enhancing cybersecurity measures, investing in advanced technologies, and conducting cybersecurity exercises to prepare for

potential threats.

If the security situation escalates, and Russia decides to retaliate on a large scale deploying kinetic means, and to use oil, wheat, and gas as weapons and disrupt maritime trade, it would pose a significant global repercussions, extending to countries like Pakistan, which has a historical legacy in the Afghan conflict against the USSR.

In the event of maritime trade route disruptions, Pakistan would confront economic challenges, including higher prices for essential commodities, decreased exports, and overall economic instability. Additionally, as a nation heavily reliant on imports for its energy needs, Pakistan could face shortages and increased prices of oil and gas, precipitating energy crises and economic strain.

An escalation in commodity and oil prices would profoundly impact Pakistan's economy, primarily through inflationary pressures and widening trade deficits. As a nation heavily reliant on imported commodities and oil, Pakistan would face increased production costs, leading to higher prices for goods and services, ultimately affecting consumers' purchasing power. Moreover, the country's trade deficit could further expand as the prices of imported commodities rise, straining its balance of payments and potentially depleting foreign exchange reserves.

Additionally, Pakistan's energy sector, which heavily de-

pends on imported oil and gas, would bear the brunt of escalating oil prices. Higher energy production costs would translate into increased electricity prices and transportation expenses, posing challenges to industrial productivity and economic growth. The government, meanwhile, may face heightened fiscal pressures to maintain subsidies on essential commodities, potentially straining public finances and diverting resources from other development priorities.

Furthermore, the escalation in commodity and oil prices could exert pressure on Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, affecting the country's ability to meet external debt obligations and finance imports.

To counteract these potential ramifications, Pakistan would need to engage in diplomatic efforts, collaborating with regional and international partners to mitigate the impact of maritime trade disruptions and ensure the security and stability of trade routes. Pakistan would also need to implement effective economic management strategies, policy interventions, and efforts to diversify its energy sources and reduce reliance on imported commodities. Such measures are crucial to navigating the economic impacts of rising global commodity prices and ensuring the stability and resilience of Pakistan's economy in the face of external shocks.

Commerce News**Bikulon sees vast scope in Pakistan's pharma, textile sectors**

LAHORE (APP): Head of Regional Development and Investment Attractive Department of National Investment

Agency Kyrgyzstan Bikulon Damirbek said the pharmaceutical and textile sectors of Pakistan hold vast scope for bilateral trade with Kyrgyzstan, having a wide array of opportunities for economic cooperation between the two countries.

He stated this while talking to a Pak trade delegation led by Kyrgyz honorary Consul Meher Kashif Younis, currently visiting Kyrgyz to explore the potentials of enhancing bilateral trade, said the consul's spokesman here Sunday.

Bikulon said Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector is one of the largest in the Islamic world, with

a diverse range of products catering to both domestic and international markets. Its pharmaceutical companies have developed expertise in producing high-quality generic drugs, which could address Kyrgyzstan's healthcare needs. By exploring partnerships and collaborations in this sector, Kyrgyzstan could gain access to affordable medicines while Pakistan could expand its market presence in Central Asia.

Bikulon said exploring the vast scope of Pakistan's pharmaceuticals and textile industry in Kyrgyzstan requires concerted efforts from both governments to facilitate trade and investment. This could involve initiatives such as trade delegations, joint ventures, and the

establishment of trade agreements to create a conducive environment for business collaboration. He was of the view that enhanced connectivity through improved transportation links and logistical infrastructure would further facilitate trade between the two countries, asserting that investments in transportation corridors and border facilitation measures would reduce trade barriers and enhance the efficiency of cross-border trade.

On this occasion, Meher Kashif Younis said that Pakistan's pharmaceuticals and textile industry in Kyrgyzstan offer a significant opportunity to strengthen bilateral trade and economic ties.

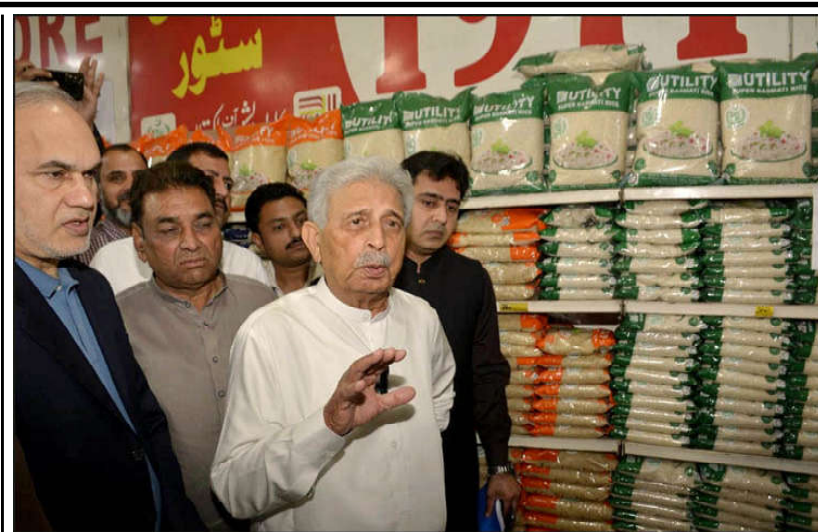
Price control mechanism fully activated: DC

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain said that a price control mechanism has been fully activated to control the prices of food items and all markets are being monitored on a daily basis.

He expressed these views during his visit to the vegetable and fruit market in Sialkot.

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain conducted the auction of vegetables and fruits under his supervision while Secretary Market Committee Muhammad Abdullah gave a briefing.

The Deputy Commissioner later visited different areas of the city and inspected the ongoing activities under the 'Suthra Punjab Program' along with officers of the Solid Waste Management Company (SWMC).



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Industries and Production's Rana Tanveer Hussain visit of USC Store at Shadman.

Faheem Saigol says: Fiscal deficit, debt repayments add to financing needs

LAHORE (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF), Faheemur Rehman Saigol has observed that persistent fiscal deficits and debt repayments have resulted in consistently high annual gross financing needs, averaging 27 percent of GDP over the past decade. This level was notably

higher than the emerging market threshold of 15 percent. He said that the growing debt stock carries significant fiscal costs and debt vulnerabilities.

In a statement here on Sunday, he said that in the past two decades, Pakistan has witnessed two consecutive years of the highest budget deficits in 2022 and 2023.

Overseas investors increase Chinese interbank bond holdings in Feb

SHANGHAI (APP): Overseas institutions increased their holdings of Chinese interbank bonds in February, official data has showed. By the end of last month, bonds in China's interbank market held by overseas institutions reached 3.95 trillion yuan (about 556.3 billion U.S. dollars), said a report released by the People's Bank of China Shanghai Head Office.

Bilal Yasin reviews quality of essential items in Ramadan bazaars

LAHORE: Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin on Sunday visited different Ramadan bazaars, marts and factories and reviewed the prices and quality of essential items.

According to official sources here, the minister reviewed the quality and prices of food items in China Scheme and Sabzazar Ramadan markets and took feedback from the citizens present in the market.

Bilal Yasin said that good quality food items at fixed prices were available to citizens in Ramadan bazaars. Increasing the supply of essential commodities helped bring

down the prices, and this is a permanent process that would continue, he added.

The minister said that the sale of low-cost and quality items was being ensured in the Ramadan bazaars across the province. The food minister also visited leading marts and food factories in Shadman and Gulberg areas where 2 marts were heavily fined for violating laws while huge quantities of substandard oil and spices were discarded on the spot. Bilal Yasin ordered the administration that strict action against adulteration mafia was necessary and all resources must be utilised for this cause.



ISLAMABAD: Tailors busy stitching clothes for upcoming Eid ul Fitr festival.



HYDERABAD: Wheat crop is ready for harvesting at Latifabad.

UNHCR Commissioner briefed on carpet sector

LAHORE (APP): United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific Damla Bayuktasik along with the delegation visited the office of Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) here Sunday. The Association's Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf, senior central leader Abdul Latif Malik, Riaz Ahmed, Major @ Akhtar Nazir and Muhammad Riaz welcomed the delegation.

During the meeting, bilateral issues regarding teaching skills to Afghan refugees were discussed.

The UN delegation was also given detailed information regarding the technical activities of the Carpet Training Institute (CTI), production and exports of hand-made carpets. The delegation was also briefed about the details of the establishment of a center to teach skills to Afghan refugees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and asked for support.

Undeterred resolve — only way to end economic woes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Given its location, landscape, environment, weather, shores and fertile land, Pakistan had always been the most potential and business friendly destination offering volumes of dividends to investors and businessmen.

Although fluctuating policies of the past landed this potential state into serious economic crunch with putting it back on track becoming a gigantic task, yet it can be vibrant again if consistent, holistic and result oriented approach is adopted.

Even today, the numbers of brotherly countries are waiting for a nod to invest billions of dollars in different sectors of Pakistan economy and

the newly formed government has already tightened belts for a tough ride ahead.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team is also aware that they would be confronting a myriad of daunting economic hurdles, ranging from soaring inflationary pressures and staggering external debt burden to diminished exchange reserves and fluctuating currency values.

As the economic panorama, shrouded in uncertainty and volatility, necessitates adept navigation and resolute action to guide nation towards stability, the government diligently articulated its resolve to fight out this challenge.

led new coalition government, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif soon after assuming office, issued directives to pertinent authorities for formulating proposals to reduce government expenditures and undertaking a comprehensive overhaul of country's economic framework. Responding to this exigency, the new government employs immediate measures for bolstering revenues and curbing escalating fiscal deficit with the Prime Minister also mandating commencement of digitization and automation process within the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

“Reducing inflationary burden on people is one of the most pressing challenges for the government. It would have to go for immediate solutions to ease inflationary burden,” said Dr Usman Chohan, Advisor on Economic Affairs at Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS).

He said the situation would be more exigent in an environment where on one hand the people would be expecting to bring down inflation while International Monetary Fund (IMF), in a likely follow-up program, pressurizing the government to extract more from public in terms of revenue collecting and electricity price initiatives.

Identifying global economic slowdown as a significant contributor to Pakistan's financial woes, with inflation, energy costs and purchasing power constraints exacerbating the situation, Dr Usman proposes a roadmap for economic recovery.

“Mobilization of government-to-government (G2G) investments through the Strategic Investment Facilitation Cell (SIFC) can be very important,” he pleaded and underscored the inevitability of domestic stability, particularly in monetary affairs, to reignite local investment. “Then, we must provide overseas Pakistanis a conducive and secure investment climate, thereby stimulating economic activity.”

CM KP assures to address problems in metropolis

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur met with Members of National Assembly (MNAs) and Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) affiliated with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) here on Sunday to discuss public issues and development matters concerning the provincial capital.

The meeting focused on a range of issues including healthcare, security, traffic management, infrastructure improvement, provision of clean drinking water, sewerage, and other related concerns affecting the populace of Peshawar.

CM Ali Amin Khan Gandapur said that Peshawar is everyone's city, and its development is his top priority. "We will strive to make Peshawar once again a city of blossoms", he said.

He added, "We aim to transition Peshawar's street lights to solar energy and are considering projects such as running trains to alleviate traffic congestion".

Discussions also highlighted the possibility of engaging private companies to implement a train system based on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) model.

The issue of sanitation in Peshawar is grave and will be addressed

on a priority basis with sustainable solutions, assured Ali Amin Gandapur. The chief minister also emphasized the need to overhaul the city's sanitation system by shifting it underground.

In order to enhance public services, in all autonomous institutions, the provincial government will appoint hardworking and professional individuals based on merit, CM reiterated. He made it clear that no political recommendations would be entertained in this process.

He said that local governments will be empowered and strengthened to ensure that public issues are resolved at the grassroots level.



PESHAWAR: Faithful Muslims are breaking the fast (Iftar) under the supervision of charitable organization during the Holy month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak, at Stadium Chowk in Peshawar.

PFA adopted zero tolerance over sale of unhealthy chicken: DG

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has tightened the noose around the suppliers of dead and emaciated chickens in Lahore by placing screening pickets at the entry points of the provincial metropolis.

To monitor the ongoing crackdown against vendors selling unhealthy chicken, PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid conducted a visit to meat shops in Tollinton Market here on Sunday. He said that PFA imposed hefty fines on two meat

shops, served warning notices on 12 food business operators (FBOs) and issued improvement notices to two others.

Moreover, the authority discarded 61kg of stale meat and 400kg of dead chickens during the operation. The meat safety teams will thoroughly inspect the vehicles transporting chicken flocks to local poultry shops in Lahore to meet the daily consumption. He said that the decision was taken to control the sale and purchase of sick.

PFA discards 1500 kg of adulterated tea

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) in its ongoing drive to check food outlets, discarded over 1,500 kg of adulterated tea while inspecting various sites. The PFA spokesman said that the Deputy Director of PFA on a tip-off conducted a raid in the Kashmiri Bazar area and seized 1500 kg of spurious tea worth Rs 2 million.

The team also confiscated different types of material and packing machines from the spot as the tea was being prepared with a mixture of colours. He further said that strict action was being taken against violators to ensure hygienic food to the residents.

Cleanliness work in 325 villages in progress

SIALKOT (APP): The cleanliness of 325 villages of the district was progressing successfully under the 'Suthera Punjab Programme'.

This was stated by District Council Chief Officer Ulfat Shahzad while reviewing the cleanliness drive in District Council Sialkot.



LAHORE: Former Governor of the Punjab Mr. Shahid Hamid calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Measures under way to make Punjab drug-free: police

LAHORE (APP): Following the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Punjab Police have accelerated crackdown across province for making Punjab drug-free.

Under the direction of Inspector General Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, targeted operations of police teams are ongoing on the bases of drug smugglers and dealers across the province including Lahore.

Punjab Police Spokesman said that during the last 24 hours, 635 raids were conducted on the hideouts of drug

5 dead, 1223 injured in 1103 RTCs in Punjab

LAHORE: At least five persons were killed and 1223 injured in 1103 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of these, 568 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 655 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of Hospitals.

Furthermore, the analysis showed those 649 drivers, 41 underage drivers, 144 pedestrians, and 435 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes.

Work underway on drainage project in Daska: Minister

Independent Report
SIALKOT: Provincial Minister for Local Government Punjab Zeeshan Rafique has said that under the Punjab Cities Program (PCP) of the Punjab government, work on a comprehensive drainage project in Daska city at a cost of Rs1 billion is going on rapidly.

In January 2025, all projects for the construction of the 26,000-foot long RCC drain will be completed, which would end the long-standing drainage problems of the city.

He expressed these views while reviewing the speed and quality of work on the ongoing development project under PCP in his constituency PP-51 Daska.

Zeeshan Rafique

said that in addition to the new RCC drains in the sewage project in Daska of PCP, rehabilitation of 31,507 feet of old drains, 282 feet of drain culvert, remodeling of 4,739 feet of drains and de-silting of 36,000 feet of old drains of Municipal Committee Daska are also part of this project.

He said that it is the responsibility of the Engineering Wing of Municipal Committee Daska to complete the project within the stipulated time and ensure quality.

He said that delay in the completion of development projects will not be tolerated and projects of public welfare will be completed within the stipulated timeline.



SARGODHA: Pastor Adwar Zafar Akhtar leads Palm Sunday processions at UP Church Noori Gate.

Organic Food: A booming trend in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR (APP): The benefits of organic food and its positive effects on human life have drawn peoples' attention towards safe food that is also rich in nutrients and grown by traditional methods using natural ingredients beneficial for health.

With the new innovation and developments in medical science that unveiled the hazards of inorganic foods to humans is seen. The scientists are still unaware about the real harmful effects of foods grown from unnatural ways but people are preferring food that is simple, pure and less

contaminated by chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides.

"Agricultural products that are grown and processed without use of chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers and genetically modified organisms are referred to inorganic food," said Darya Khan, Provincial Coordinator at Nutrition International Peshawar while talking to APP. He said such food was healthy, full of antioxidants and without allergens besides have lasting effects on immunity and life span.

He said individuals who use inorganic food are

more prone to various kinds of diseases and ailments and the best option was adaptation of home-based agriculture practices to get organic food. He said that survival rate and life expectancy of people living in remote areas is far better as compared to people living in developed cities, adding the average life span of population residing in remote areas of Pakistan like Hunza, Swat and Chitral are significantly longer and healthier due to their reliance on organic food items.

He said the food grown in natural ways is full of nutrients and devoid of harmful effects that increased immunity of human beings and protect them from falling prey to most common diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and other stomach disorders.

Besides Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and SAARC countries, he said that culture of organic food cultivation made inroads in Pakistan, adding the kitchen gardens culture at Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar was growing for organic food.

"In Ramazan, my first priority is to purchase organic food including banana, citrus and

International News

UN chief appeals for end to Gaza's 'nightmare'

Monitoring Desk
RAFAH: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on a visit to the doorstep of devastated Gaza, on Saturday said the world has seen enough of its horrors and appealed for a ceasefire to allow in more aid.

He spoke at the crossing on the Egyptian side of Rafah, where most of Gaza's population has sought refuge but Israel vows to send in ground troops against Hamas fighters, despite the fears of Guterres and other global leaders. "Palestinians in Gaza—children, women, men—remain stuck in a non-stop nightmare," Guterres said. "I carry the voices of the vast majority of the world who have seen enough."

"Any further onslaught will make things even worse."

Despite warnings that a Rafah operation would cause mass civilian casual-

ties and worsen the humanitarian crisis gripping Gaza after nearly six months of Israeli bombing, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he will press ahead with the attack.

But his government is under growing international pressure to ease its bombardment and ground offensive, which the health ministry in Gaza says has killed 32,142 people.

Large parts of the territory have been reduced to rubble and the World Food Programme has said Gazans are already "starving to death", with famine projected by May in northern Gaza without urgent intervention. The Gaza health ministry, in its latest toll on Saturday, reported at least 72 people killed overnight.

Israeli forces continued operations in and around Gaza's biggest hospital complex, Al-Shifa, for

a sixth day on Saturday. The army claimed it had questioned more than 800 suspects and found "a large haul of weapons".

The "precise" operation is being conducted without harm to civilians or medical personnel, the Israeli said.

The UN's humanitarian agency, OCHA, said "health workers have been among those reported arrested and detained". Mohammed, 59, who lives a short walk from the Al-Shifa complex in Gaza City, told AFP he had seen "many bodies" in the streets, buildings on fire and tanks blocking the roads.

"I feel that Gaza has become worse than the fires of hell," he said, giving only his first name.

Netanyahu on Friday reiterated his plan to send ground troops into the southern city of Rafah.



United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres talks to the media during a visit to the Rafah border crossing.

Over 200 Nigerian school hostages released after abduction

MAIDUGURI (INP): Over 200 students and staff abducted by gunmen from a school in northern Nigeria earlier this month have been released, the office of the governor of the state of Kaduna said on Sunday.

The kidnapping, which took place on March 7 in Kuriga, a dusty town in northwestern Kaduna State, was the first mass kidnapping in the country since 2021. Kaduna governor Uba Sani said the country's National Security Adviser had coordinated the release of the children.

Israel besieges two more Gaza hospitals, demands evacuations, Palestinians say

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Israeli forces besieged two more Gaza hospitals on Sunday, pinning down medical teams under heavy gunfire, the Palestinian Red Crescent said, and Israel said it had captured 480 militants in continued clashes at Gaza's main Al Shifa hospital.

Israel says hospitals in the Palestinian enclave, where war has been raging for over five months, are used by Hamas militants as bases.

Russia mourns as toll from concert hall massacre climbs to 137

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia observed a national day of mourning on Sunday after a massacre in a Moscow concert hall killed 137 people, the deadliest attack in Europe to have been claimed by the Islamic State (IS) group.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has vowed to punish those behind the "barbaric terrorist attack", saying four gunmen trying to flee to Ukraine had been arrested.

Kyiv has strongly denied any connection, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accusing Putin of trying to shift the blame onto them.

Putin, in his first public remarks on the attack, made no reference to a statement by IS claiming responsibility.

At least 133 people

were killed when camouflaged gunmen stormed the Crocus City Hall, in Moscow's northern suburb of Krasnogorsk, and then set fire to the building on Friday evening.

The Islamic State group wrote on Telegram on Saturday that the attack was "carried out by four IS fighters armed with machine guns, a pistol, knives and firebombs," as part of "the raging war" with "countries fighting Islam".

It is the deadliest attack in Russia for almost two decades.

Russian officials expect the death toll to rise further, with more than 100 wounded in hospital.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said rescue workers were still pulling bodies from the burnt-out building on Saturday.



Members of the Civil Defense carry a girl, who remained more than 12 hours under the rubble of her house, which was destroyed by the heavy rains in Petropolis, Brazil.

35 Somalis brought to India for trial over ship hijacking

Monitoring Desk
MUMBAI: India brought 35 accused Somalis to Mumbai on Saturday, days after they were apprehended when naval commandos recaptured a hijacked bulk carrier and rescued several hostages.

The December hijacking of the Maltese-flagged MV Ruen was the first time since 2017 that any cargo vessel had been

successfully boarded by Somali pirates. Indian commandos boarded and took control of the vessel on March 17 some 260 nautical miles (480 kilometres) off the coast of Somalia.

The destroyer INS Kolkata, which led the rescue operation, arrived in Mumbai early on Saturday carrying all 35 men accused of the hijacking.

US forces engage six Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles over southern Red Sea

FLORIDA (INP): US forces engaged six Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over the southern Red Sea after the group launched four anti-ship ballistic missiles toward a Chinese-owned oil tanker, the US Central Command said on Saturday.

Iranian-backed Houthis launched the missiles in the vicinity of M/V Huang Pu, a Chinese-owned oil tanker, the Central Command said in a post on X.

A fifth missile was fired toward the oil tanker, which issued a distress call, the Central Command said, adding that no casualties were reported in the incident and a fire on board was extinguished. US forces then engaged six UAVs, five of which crashed into the Red Sea, and one flew inland into Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, the Central Command said.

Taiwan calls for return of military officer rescued by China

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: Taiwan called on Saturday for the swift return of one of its military officers who was rescued by Chinese authorities after losing contact during a fishing vacation. Two men from Taiwan's outlying Kinmen island were found on March 18 by the coastguard of China's Fujian province after the engine of their boat failed. Chinese authorities said one of the anglers, surnamed Hu, was an active

China vows to safeguard its territorial integrity after South China Sea incident

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China's defence ministry warned the Philippines against "provocative" actions and said China would safeguard its territorial sovereignty on Sunday, a day after an incident in disputed waters of the South China Sea. "We warn the Philippines to stop making any remarks that may lead to the intensification of conflicts and escalation of the situation, and stop all infringing and provocative actions."

Girl buried under rubble rescued after 16 hours as storm kills at least 12 in Brazil

Monitoring Desk
PETROPOLIS: Search teams in southeastern Brazil rescued a girl buried for more than 16 hours in the rubble of a collapsed house, following a powerful storm on Friday that has so far claimed at least a dozen lives.

Authorities have deployed teams to the mountainous areas of Rio de Janeiro state, describing the situation caused by the deluge as "critical". Four of the deaths in Rio state occurred when the storm caused a house to collapse in the city of Petropolis, 70 kilometres inland from the capital.

The girl's father, who was found dead next to her on Saturday morning, had "heroically protected the girl with his body," a neighbour told AFP.

"We are in pain, but grateful for this miracle," said Luis Claudio de Souza, 63. The deluge came as Brazil, South America's largest country, is suffering

through a recent string of extreme weather events, which experts say are more likely to occur due to climate change. At least nine people have been killed in the state of Rio de Janeiro, officials said, while the neighbouring state of Espirito Santo has confirmed at least four dead and seven missing.

Such environmental tragedies "are intensifying with climate change," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said in a post on X, adding that thousands had been rendered homeless by the storm. He expressed sympathy with the victims and said his government was working with state and local authorities to "protect, prevent and repair flood damage."

Espirito Santo governor Renato Casagrande said the situation in the town of Mimoso do Sul was "chaotic," with the number of fatalities there yet to be determined.

Pakistan will always be voice of occupied Kashmiri, Palestinian peoples: Munir

NEW YORK (INP): Pakistan will continue to stand by the people of Jammu & Kashmir and Palestine until they exercise their right to self-determination, Ambassador Munir Akram said Saturday after hoisting the national flag at the Pakistan House in New York to commemorate the 84th 'Pakistan Day'.

The National Anthem was played as the flag went up the mast at the simple ceremony.

"Pakistan continues to be a strong voice for universal human rights including the right to self-determination of all peoples under foreign occupation, especially the people of

Jammu & Kashmir and Palestine," the ambassador told a distinguished gathering at the event jointly hosted by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations and the Pakistan Consulate General, New York.

He said that March 23 represented a milestone in Pakistan's history when Muslims of the sub-continent resolved to establish an independent state of their own under the dynamic leadership of the Quaid-e-Azam.

"This is the day to pay rich tribute to the lofty vision of our founding fathers and their democratic struggle which made the

establishment of Pakistan possible in just seven years."

Ambassador Akram said that Pakistan joined the United Nations one month after its independence and ever since has played an active and constructive role in forging friendship and peace and promoting multilateral cooperation in accordance with the UN Charter.

Pakistan, he added, believes that an international order based on the principles of the UN Charter must adhere to consistent implementation of the principles, particularly those related to the right to self-determination, non-use of

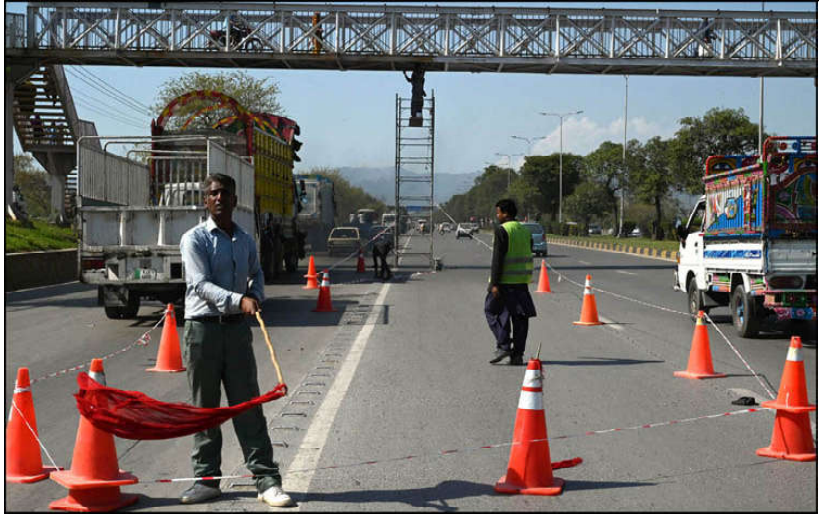
force, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, non-interference in their internal affairs as well as international cooperation to promote universal prosperity.

"Inspired by the vision of its founding fathers, Pakistan will continue to work for a peaceful and stable international order within the framework of the UN and its principles," he added.

Pakistani Mission Counsellor Naeem Sabir Khan and Head of Chancery of the Consulate Umar Sheikh read out the messages of the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Pakistan Day, respectively.



ISLAMABAD: Christian devotees attend a Palm Sunday Ceremony at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Painters busy coloring a pedestrian bridge at Expressway.

Grand Mufti of Bosnia & Herzegovina calls on Rector IIUI

ISLAMABAD (APP): The esteemed Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr Husein ef Kavazovic called on Professor Dr Samina Malik, Rector, International Islamic University, Islamabad at her office in the new campus of the university.

During the meeting issues pertaining to expanding bilateral educational ties between IIUI, Bosnia and Herzegovinian universities especially in the fields of Islamic studies, training of Aima, Jurisprudence and law were discussed, said a press release here yesterday.

The grand Mufti appreciating the role of IIUI in serving the Muslim world said that there are a number of learned scholars, bureaucrats, Aima and researchers in Bosnia who have benefited from the IIUI.

He said the university has close objectives akin to the Islamic studies faculties of the Bosnia and Herzegovinian universities.

He also expressed appreciation for the deep bonds of friendship between the peoples of Bosnia and Pakistan. The grand Mufti was accompanied by the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Emin Cohodarevic.

It was agreed in the meeting that an MoU for the mutual cooperation in the field of education and exchange of experiences shall be materialized soon to enhance these bilateral ties practically.

During the meeting, The IIUI Rector extended a warm welcome to the Grand Mufti, expressing heartfelt congratulations on his forthcoming receipt of the Sitare-e-Quaid-e-Azam Award on March 23rd, conferred by the President of Pakistan.

She appraised him about the services, role, vision and future goals of university as well as briefed about the faculties of the universities in addition to the presence of international teachers and students.

Minorities demand to increase 5% job quota

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minorities on Sunday demanded to concerned authorities and stakeholders to implement 5 percent job quota for minorities.

According to them the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms and also ensuring the full participation and protection of minorities.

Talking to APP here Sunday Ramaish Kumar a minorities representative has said that at present the quota in government jobs for the minorities is five per cent but only two to three per cent was being implemented. He said that only lower grade jobs were being offered such as sweepers and other sanitary workers or jobs below Grade 14. He said that the voices are being raised by the minority community for the violation of rules and implementation of Quota.

Govt cognizant of addressing TB as public health priority: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that provision of universal access to quality essential health services was the constitutional responsibility of the Government that recognized the importance of addressing Tuberculosis (TB) as a public health priority.

The government has implemented various programmes and policies to combat this disease, the prime minister said in a message on World TB Day 2024, I applaud the

services of everyone committed to the fight against tuberculosis and reiterate our Government's resolve towards supporting the initiatives aimed at eradicating TB and improving the health and well-being of our citizens," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying.

The prime minister said Tuberculosis remained a significant global health challenge, causing immense suffering and claiming far too many lives every year.

"It is crucial that we prioritize TB elimination in our global health agenda and

allocate resources accordingly. Together, we can harness innovation, research, and technology to accelerate progress towards a TB-free world," he added.

The prime minister said that while they strived to provide equitable health services to their citizens, they deeply appreciated the role of the private sector and our global partners.

"I call upon all partners, organisations, healthcare professionals, and individuals to unite in our efforts to end TB. We must work collaboratively to strengthen healthcare systems.

Shaza Fatima says: Provision of maximum facilities top priority

LAHORE (APP): Minister of State for Information Technology Shaza Fatima has said that provision of maximum facilities to people is top priority of the government.

She said this while visiting a Utility Store in Green Town as per the direction of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday. She said that government wanted to improve the system of utility stores.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had started Ramazan Nigebhan package to facilitate deserving people in Punjab during the holy month of Ramazan, she said and ap-

preciated the initiative.

Shaza said that PM Shehbaz Sharif was working hard to control inflation, adding that no doubt country was facing economic challenges but soon with the grace of the Allah Almighty these challenges would be overcome. The state minister said that being a nation, it was a responsibility of the government to steer the country out of economic crises. To a question, she said that some complaints had been received regarding registration at utility stores, adding that "we are in touch with the Punjab government and complaints related to registration would be solved soon".

Govt committed to provide low-cost, affordable living opportunities: Pirzada

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada has said that the government is committed to providing low-cost and affordable living opportunities to the poor and vulnerable segments of society.

While chairing a meeting of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), he emphasized the importance of ensuring that plots are allocated strictly on merit.

During the meeting, Riaz Pirzada was apprised about the management and working of the department by Director General FGEHA Capt. ®

Muhammad Zafar Iqbal.

The minister urged the identification and removal of any irregularities to uphold transparency in the allotment process. Furthermore, he directed the Director General to conduct a thorough and transparent audit of the authority stressing the need for stringent measures against corruption, as no one will be spared on any irregularity.

"We must deliver what we committed to the allottees and highlighted the urgency of completing ongoing and stalled development projects to facilitate the government employees and the general public.

Azma rejects allegations of Barrister Saif

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information Azma Bokhari while giving a stern response on the statement of Barrister Saif stated that according to the officials of Adiyala Jail, Pervaiz Elahi fell in the washroom and got injured.

Barrister Saif before levelling an allegation on Maryam Nawaz should study the report of the Adiyala Jail officials. You should get your own Chief Minister treated who is suggesting the officers to throw bricks instead of getting treatment of Pervaiz Elahi. Azma Bokhari stated that Pervaiz Elahi's son has no worry about his father.



H.E. Ambassador Mudassar Tipu inaugurating Photo Exhibition held at Burj Azadi, Tehran to show case beauty of Pakistan.

Embassy holds exhibition in Tehran to mark Pakistan Day, Nouroz celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Embassy of Pakistan in Iran organised a photo exhibition titled "Khoobsurat Pakistan" as part of the Pakistan Day and Nouruz celebrations at Burj Azadi to promote Pakistan's culture and tourism.

Ambassador of Pakistan Mudassar Tipu inaugurated the exhibition along with Ali Raza Dabbaghi, a representative of Iran's Ministry of Culture.

The Iranian Ministry of Culture accorded special permission to the Embassy of Pakistan to hold this event at the venue which signifies the close cultural ties and brotherly relations of both the countries.

The representative of Ministry of Culture appre-

ciated the efforts of the Pakistan Embassy and called it a milestone towards the promotion of tourism and people to people contact, which will further strengthen the brotherly relations of both countries.

A m b a s s a d o r Mudassar thanked Ali Raza for all the support of the Iranian government.

He said that Pakistan was blessed with marvelous beauty as its mighty mountains, virgin beaches, snow clapped mountains, deserts and historical monuments were custodians of ancient civilizations.

He said that as Iran was also a very beautiful and unique country, therefore such ventures would help improve the tourism between both countries.

USAID chief calls her high Pak Day award 'testament' to enduring Pak-US ties

WASHINGTON (APP): The Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Samantha Power, has thanked Pakistan for conferring Hilal-e-Quaid-i-Azam, a high civil award, calling it a testament to the enduring partnership between her organization and the Pakistani people.

The President of Pakistan conferred that award on her on the Pakistan Day in recognition of her "outstanding contribution" towards strengthening Pakistan-US relations.

"The efforts by Ms. Power are a reflection of her commitment to assist the people of Pakistan and forge a strong and deep partnership between Pakistan and the US," stated the citation that was read out the occasion.

Ms. Power, who has been serving as USAID chief since May 2021, is a proponent of strong Pakistan-US cooperation in humanitarian and socio-economic sectors like health, education and climate

change and promoting people to people exchanges.

"As USAID administrator, she was instrumental in the provision of significant life-saving US humanitarian assistance to mitigate the disastrous impacts of the floods in 2022," the citation said.

In a video message, she also recalled the devastation when one-third of Pakistan was inundated due to devastating floods in 2022.

"I will never forget visiting Pakistan in September of 2022. Flying over the floods, feeling sure that I was flying over an ocean, only to be reminded that the ocean was in fact hundreds of miles away. And there were entire towns submerged under the seemingly infinite expanse of water below."

She spoke about the support from the highest levels of the White House and both houses of the US Congress that facilitated an assistance of \$215 million to the flood affected people.

Speakers urge world powers to help resolve Kashmir dispute

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): The Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Peace & Justice Organization (JKPO), Tanveer-ul-Islam, has urged the world powers to help resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Tanveer-ul-Islam, speaking to a webinar "Voices for Kashmir: Seeking Truth, Justice, and Dignity," organized by Jammu and Kashmir Peace & Justice Organization, Tanveer-ul-Islam called for immediate international intervention to address the escalating humanitarian catastrophe in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He said Kashmiri Muslims have faced systemic human rights transgressions, including arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances for decades. He condemned draconian measures such as arbitrary detentions and violent repression, along with the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution affecting the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.



Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Mr. Khalil Hasmi attended the closing ceremony of China-Pakistan Gandhara Art Exhibition held at Shenzhen Museum, China.

China-Pakistan Gandhara Art Exhibition closing ceremony held in Shenzhen, China

BEIJING (APP): The closing ceremony of the exhibition titled "Gandhara Heritage along the Silk Road: A Joint China-Pakistan Exhibition" took place at the Shenzhen Museum on Sunday.

The ceremony was attended by senior Chinese officials including Wang Xudong, Director of the Palace Museum; Zeng Xianglai, Director of Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism, and Sports Bureau of Shenzhen; Jia Jianwei, Director of Gansu Provincial Museum; and Huang Chen, Director of

Shenzhen Museum.

Pakistan side was represented by Pakistan Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, along with the Acting Consul General of Pakistan in Guangzhou and officials from the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing and the Pakistan Consulate-General in Guangzhou.

The ceremony marked the successful culmination of the largest Gandhara exhibition in China's history, showcasing over 170 artifacts from seven different museums in Pakistan.

The exhibition de-

buted last year at the prestigious Palace Museum in Beijing for three months but due to overwhelming interest from the Chinese audience, it evolved into a touring exhibition, making stops in Gansu and finally Shenzhen, following necessary legal procedures.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Hashmi reflected on the significance of the initiative, highlighting the successful collaboration between Pakistan and China in organizing the largest Gandhara Art Exhibition in China's history.

UN responsible for establishing peace, prevent crimes against humanity in dispute regions: Speakers

GENEVA (INP): The speakers addressing a seminar in Geneva said the role of the United Nations in peace-building operations is crucial, especially in the context of addressing rights violations as warning signs of conflict. According to Kashmir Media Service, hosted by World Muslim Congress was held on the sidelines of the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and addressed by noted international law experts, rights activists, academicians and journalists, including Dr Joseph Wronka, Leon Kaulahua Siu, Robert Fantina, Misbah Shafiq,

Zafar Ahmed Qureshi and Altaf Hussain Wani, the permanent representative WMC.

Throwing light on the UN role and responsibilities to ensure the implementation of international law and enforcement human rights mechanisms, the speakers said human rights components in peace operations play a significant role in advancing inclusive development, rule of law and peace. "These components also help prevent future conflict by addressing grievances", they said, adding ensuring human rights serve as a shared and effective basis for UN's work.

They said that maintaining peace and security, protecting human rights, preventing genocide, crimes against humanity, supporting sustainable development and upholding international law were prime responsibilities of the UN. Discussing the failure of the UN peace-building operations in effectively addressing human rights as warning signs of conflict, they said that there was a dire need to enhance strategies to ensure that human rights of the people were protected and respected under all circumstances and more important to add teeth to human rights machinery.



LAHORE: Police officials launch crackdown against kite flying across the city, in Lahore.

Campaign for registration of house servants and tenants data in full swing

ISLAMABAD: Following the special orders of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police "Knock the Door" campaign for the registration of employees and tenants is in

full swing, a public relations officer said.

He said that, during this campaign various teams of Islamabad Capital Police are going to the streets and door-to-door to ensure the registration of tenants and domestic workers as well as to inquire about the problems faced by the citizens.

In this regard, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Islamabad has registered a data of 508 house servants of 1,332 houses from Khanna and Bani gala Police Station jurisdiction.



involved in any kind of suspicious activity.

He said citizens are also requested that they can ask for the identity of a person if someone dressed in civil clothes comes to their house in order to collect the data.

Unregistered employees and tenants could be involved in serious incidents like theft and robbery by impersonating as a common citizen and Islamabad Capital Police is trying to provide a safe environment to the citizens of the federal capital by using all its resources.