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Sindh CM, Saudi envoy discuss implementation of 'Route to Makkah' project

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Mr Nawaf Saeed A. Al Maliki in their meeting at CM House discussed the Route to Makkah Project and agreed to fulfil all the requirements at the earliest to implement the project.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Federal Secretary Atta ur Rehman, PSCM Agha Wasif, Secretary of Hajj & Umerah Mohammad M. Albejawi of Saudi Arabia and others.

The Route to Makkah project is a mechanism for shifting the immigration and customs clearance process from Saudi Arabia to airports of Pakistan aimed at relieving Hujjaj from the ordeal of immigration and customs clearance upon landing at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

The chief minister said that the project was very important and he was

keen to see it implemented for the Hujjaj of Sindh at Jinnah Terminal. Ambassador Mr Nawaf Saeed A. Al Maliki congratulated Syed Murad Ali Shah on taking over as Sindh Chief Minister for the third time. The Ambassador of Saudi Arabia told the CM that the pilot project of 'The Route to Makkah' initiative was implemented in 2019 at Islamabad International Airport. In 2019 22,000 Hujjaj travelled through this project. In Hajj 2022 and 2023 Route to Makkah Project was again implemented through Islamabad Airport and 15,629 & 26,546 Hujjaj travelled through it.

After successful completion, the Prime Minister's Office directed for up-scaling of the said initiative to other four airports - Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar. Efforts were made to extend the project, however, the MOU between both Governments was signed on 17th May 2023.



PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacting with the families of the deceased and injured in the wake of recent torrential rains and heavy snowfall.

ECP uploads Forms 45, 46, 48, 49 on website

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has finally uploaded Forms 45, 46, 48, and 49 for national and provincial assembly constituencies on its website.

The Election Commission is mandated by Sub-section 10 of Section 95 of the Election Act to upload Form 45 on its website within a 14-day timeframe. In both general elections and by-elections, Form 45 is consistently cited and scrutinized.

It provides details such as the total number of votes cast, the breakdown of votes obtained by each candidate, and allows candidates to independently verify their vote count from the polling station.

Form 46 contains information about the num-

ber of ballot papers received and extracted from the ballot boxes at the polling station. It also includes figures for challenged, invalid, and canceled ballot papers, along with any legal implications associated with these numbers.

Form 47 provides details on the preliminary results of the constituency, as well as the number of votes cast and invalidated. Form 48 holds significant importance in compiling election results, as it includes the tally of votes received by each candidate in a constituency.

Form 49, published in the Gazette of Pakistan, serves as the official and conclusive result document. It lists the candidates' names, their affiliated political parties, and the vote counts obtained in the constituency.



KARACHI: Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Karachi Mr. Yang Yundong cutting cake during International Women's Day celebration ceremony at Consulate General of China.

CPEC poised to create more job opportunities in Pakistan: Chinese CG

KARACHI (APP): The Consul General of China in Karachi, Yang Yundong, Wednesday, said that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects have created a large number of jobs in Pakistan, providing women with platforms to showcase their abilities.

With advancement in cooperation between China and Pakistan, more employment opportunities will be created for women in coming years, he said while addressing a reception hosted by the Consulate General of China in Karachi in connection with International Women's Day.

The event was attended by former federal

minister Barrister Shahida Jameel, female entrepreneurs, women from Sindh and Balochistan belonging to various fields such as commerce, education, culture, and media as well as female overseas Chinese in Pakistan.

Referring to job creation through CPEC projects the CG informed that at the Thar Coal Mine project over a hundred women have received truck driving training and dozens of the female truck drivers were busy. They participate in the construction of the project, contributing to local development while changing their own lives, he added.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah exchanges views with the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf Saeed A. Al Maliki during meeting held at CM House in Karachi.

Conditions of fair trial not fulfilled in Zulifkar Bhutto's trial: SC

SC opinion on Bhutto's trial sets a new history and tradition: PM; Bilawal terms SC opinion on Presidential reference on ZAB case as historic

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday observed that the conditions of fair trial and due process was not met in trial of PPP's founder Zulifkar Ali Bhutto in murder case of Muhammad Ahmed Khan Kasuri.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa pronounced the majority opinion here.

The CJP said that judges were to decide cases impartially. There should be self-accountability within the judiciary as the judiciary cannot progress without admitting its past errors.

In its five pages written order, the top court gave opinion on questions raised in the presidential reference.

It stated, "The proceedings of the trial of Zulifkar Ali Bhutto by the

Lahore High Court (LHC) and of the appeal by the SC do not meet the requirements of the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process enshrined in Articles 4 and 9 of the Constitution.

"The Constitution and the law do not provide a mechanism to set aside the judgment whereby Bhutto was convicted and sentenced; the said judgment attained finality after the

dismissal of the review petition by this Court," it said. It said, "In its advisory jurisdiction under Article 186 of the Constitution, this Court cannot re-appraise the evidence and undo the decision of the case. However, in our detailed reasons, we shall identify the major constitutional and legal lapses that had occurred with respect to fair trial and due process."

PM, Army Chief discuss overall security situation

ISLAMABAD (Online): Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Wednesday.

He felicitated Shehbaz Sharif and extended good wishes for him on assuming office of the Prime Minister.

During the meeting, views were also exchanged on professional matters of the Pakistan Army and security affairs.

UAE leaders greet Shehbaz on assuming PM's charge

ISLAMABAD (Online): The UAE leadership has extended warm wishes and congratulations to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on assuming charge of the office of Prime Minister.

Those who extended felicitations include Vice President and Prime Minister of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

18-member Punjab cabinet sworn in

LAHORE (APP): An 18-member Punjab cabinet was sworn in during a solemn ceremony at the Governor's House, here on Wednesday.

Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman administered the oath to the newly-appointed provincial ministers after Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhter Zaman read out the order of appointment of ministers.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz attended the ceremony besides Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan and former speaker Rana Muhammad Iqbal. Senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership including Khawaja Saad Rafique was also present.

Names of the newly-appointed provincial ministers, along with their constituencies, from where they were elected to the Punjab Assembly, are as under:



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman administering oath to 18-member new Provincial Cabinet. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is also present.

Says PTI not anti-military Imran Khan endorses army's top brass' statement on May 9 probe

Suspects involved in May 9 incidents should be punished severely; Neither we are anti-army nor want a clash with forces

RAWALPINDI (Agencies): Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan endorsed a recent statement issued by the Pakistan Army's top brass in connection with a probe into the May 9 violent attacks and said his party was not against the military.

The Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) — with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir in the chair — had a day earlier committed that planners, instigators, abettors, perpetrators, and desecrators of martyrs' monuments and attackers of military installations on May 9 would certainly be brought to justice.

The May 9 attacks refer to the violent protests that broke out following the arrest of the incarcerated PTI founder in a corruption case last year.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Myanmar, Imran Haider, calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Pakistan desires to expand trade, economic cooperation with friendly countries: Alvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said that Pakistan desired to expand its trade and economic relations with the friendly countries.

The president expressed these views during separate meetings with Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Portugal Dr Muhammad Khalid Ejaz and Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Myanmar Imran Haider, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Talking to ambassador-designate to Portugal, the president urged him to work for further strengthening of bilateral trade ties with his host country, adding that Pakistan was ensuring conducive environment for the economic and trade activities.

The foreign investors should avail of such busi-

ness-friendly environment in Pakistan, President Secretary Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying.

President Alvi also underlined the need of enhancing political, cultural and people to people contacts between Pakistan and Portugal, besides strengthening of exchanges at the political level.

Portuguese IT companies could benefit from the skilled human resources of Pakistan in the respective sector, he opined.

The president, during his meeting with ambassador-designate to Myanmar, stressed upon further cementing of bilateral relations between the two countries.

He stressed that both countries were required to enhance their cooperation in business sector to promote trade.

PM completes consultation process with Nawaz on federal cabinet

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has completed consultations with PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif in connection with federal cabinet.

The federal cabinet will take oath after presidential election.

There is strong possibility that head of private bank would get the post of finance minister.

According to sources PM Shehbaz Sharif will select his economic team on his own. Some new faces will also be included in the cabinet.

Sources said two ministries have been offered to MQM initially. Faisal Sabzwari and Mustafa Kamal will be included in the cabinet. The final decision will be made by coordination committee today.

PML-N, PPP make seat to seat adjustment on two seats of senate in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (Online): PML-N and PPP have forged alliance in Senate polls in Islamabad as the two parties have made seat to seat adjustment on two seats of Senate in federal capital.

The technocrat seat from Islamabad will go to PML-N while general seat will go to PPP.

Ishaq Dar will be PML-N candidate on technocrat seat from Islamabad.

According to sources seat to seat adjustment will be made in Punjab, KP and Balochistan as well.

PPP invites applications from candidates for Senate poll

ISLAMABAD (Online): PPP has invited applications from party candidates in connection with Senate election.

In a statement issued by PPP Secretary General Nayyar Bokhari, it has been said the candidates should send applications for Senate seats in federation and Islamabad till March 10.

The applications should be sent on the address of Zardari house Islamabad and Bilawal house Karachi.

The application will be sent in the name of president PPP Parliamentarians. Bank draft valuing Rs one lac in the name of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians be attached with the application.

PM distributes huge compensation package among recent rains victims

PESHAWAR (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Wednesday distributed a huge compensation financial package among victims of the recent torrential rains and flooding of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

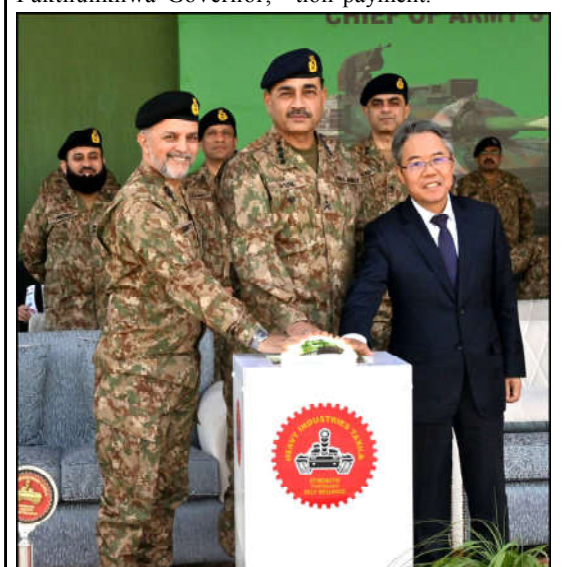
He on behalf of the Federal Government distributed Rs two million cheque among heirs of each deceased and Rs. 500,000 among each injured of the recent torrential rains and floods in different districts of the province including merged tribal districts. The prime minister handed over the compensation cheques during a function held here at Governor House.

It was the first visit of the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after assuming the office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Besides others, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor,

Haji Ghulam Ali, Members National Assembly, Khwaja Muhammad Asif, Engr Amir Muqam, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Attaullah Tarar, PML-N Leader Ishaq Dar, former Governor KP, Engr Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, senators, members provincial assemblies, Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik IGP KP Akhtar Hayat Gandapur and relatives of the rains victims were present on the occasion. A total of 40 people including 27 children died and 62 injured during recent torrential rains and floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The prime minister directed the authorities concerned and relevant departments to complete estimates of all destroyed and partially damaged houses within five days and complete the process of disbursement of compensation payment.



TAXILA: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), visited Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) as chief guest at the rollout ceremony of HAIDER tank (Pilot Project).

HIT unveils new Tank HAIDER, ISPR

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday visited Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) as chief guest at the rollout ceremony of HAIDER tank (Pilot Project). The ceremony was attended by Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of China, key officials of Chinese state company NORINCO, high officials of Government of Pakistan & Pakistan Army, and various military and civilian officials of HIT, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

During the ceremony, HIT unveiled its new Tank HAIDER, which has been indigenously manufactured in collaboration with NORINCO China and various industries of Pakistan.

HAIDER embodies

cutting-edge technology and impressive capability in the domain of tank warfare having remarkable firepower, protection and manoeuvre characteristics.

Crafted with state-of-the-art advanced technologies, HAIDER stands as a testament to Pakistani defence industry's relentless pursuit of excellence in defence innovation. The COAS was briefed in detail about the technical capabilities of the HAIDER tank and the progress being made in achieving indigenization in arms and armament. The COAS also visited other manufacturing facilities within the Heavy Industrial Complex and appreciated the commitment of the officers and workforce in successful achievement of another technological milestone.



LAHORE: Amir JUI Maulana Fazlur Rehman addressing a ceremony with lawyers.

JUI announces nationwide movement against electoral rigging after Eid

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulama Islam and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have announced separate initiatives to combat election rigging in Pakistan.

JUI-F's head Maulana Fazlur Rehman disclosed plans for a nationwide movement against electoral malpractices, scheduled to commence after Eid-ul-Fitr.

The movement, starting from Sindh, will traverse through provinces, culminating in Islamabad, with Fazlur Rehman leading the charge.

In parallel, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf declared intentions to form a grand alliance against rigging. Asad Qaiser, a PTI leader, em-

phasized their commitment to contesting alleged fraudulent mandates, asserting their support for Mahmood Khan Achakzai in the presidential election. This move is seen as a gesture towards Balochistan, aiming to address the region's challenges.

Barrister Gohar, a prominent figure within PTI, reiterated the party's dedication to peaceful political struggle within constitutional bounds. He condemned what he referred to as the "5th generation rigging," emphasizing the imperative to safeguard democracy and parliamentary integrity.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Poor performance

The nation is glad to bid adieu to the caretakers. The day could not have come sooner. Interim governments are supposed to have a limited mandate tailored for the limited time they are given in office. They are expected to keep their head down, keep the country running day-to-day, and provide an enabling environment for the smooth transfer of power within the 90-day deadline set in the Constitution.

As a rule, caretaker governments should be entirely unremarkable and completely forgettable; instead, these last interim governments will be remembered for the controversial legacy they leave behind. They not only overstayed their lawful term, they also wore out their welcome due to several key appointees' unwillingness to keep within their lane. And, by the end of it all, the caretakers somehow managed to leave the country in an even worse shape than it had been when they had taken over.

The period between August 2023 and March 2024 will be remembered for the intensified oppression of already marginalised communities, the uprooting and expulsion of Afghan refugees, the repression of a certain political party, the curtailment and evisceration of democratic norms, possibly the most controversial general election held in recent history, and the reversal of hard-fought digital freedoms. As the country slid deeper and deeper into the abyss, the interim government either stood by and did nothing or made excuses for the various forces responsible for trampling upon the Constitution and abusing the law.

Had the caretakers focused on their task and sought to deliver conscientiously, according to the terms under which they were entrusted with the responsibility, the country may by now have been on the path to healing. For this, there is no forgiveness for the caretakers' failures. The country will continue paying the price for their complacency for a very long time.

Things perhaps may have turned out differently had the country been handed over to leaders with fewer personal ambitions. Alas, some of the caretakers seemed to consider their appointment an opportunity to demonstrate their 'utility'. The prime minister repeatedly gaslighted the victims of state excesses and also demonstrated a knack for doublespeak, especially when confronted with the failings of his government. The IT minister would have nary a clue about the internet restrictions that were enforced willy-nilly under his watch.

The journalist appointed information minister had great difficulty getting along with a free press. There was also the interior minister, who controversially resigned just a month and a half before the elections to contest a seat. To be fair, a few of the appointees did quietly manage to accomplish something positive. Unfortunately, their contributions will not amount to much when this period is reviewed in history. Thankfully, we can now move on.

Berlin's blind spot

Mahir Ali

About 10 days ago, a joint Palestinian-Israeli creative endeavour titled No Other Land, chronicling the struggle for survival in Masafer Yatta — comprising a bunch of Palestinian hamlets in the West Bank — won the best documentary award as well as an audience award at the 74th Berlin International Film Festival, or Berlinale.

Two of the co-directors, Yuval Abraham and Basel Adra, made brief speeches. Adra noted there was little cause for celebration while his compatriots in Gaza were being "slaughtered and massacred", and urged Germany to "stop sending weapons to Israel". Abraham pointed out that while the two of them stood as equals on the Berlinale stage, in a couple of days they would be back in a land where his Palestinian colleague faced institutionalised discrimination. He called for an end to "this apartheid, this inequality".

Both speeches were applauded by the audience, which included Germany's culture minister, Claudia Roth. Following a backlash, mainly from fellow politicians, her office 'clarified' that she had meant to applaud only the speech of the Israeli half of the duo, and Roth posted on social media that the "shockingly one-sided speeches" were "characterised by a deep hatred of Israel".

On his way home, Abraham received more than 100 death threats, which prompted him to delay his journey to Jerusalem. In a post on X, he decried the Germans' "appalling misuse" of a term that "empties the word antisemitism of meaning and thus endangers Jews all over the world", while acknowledging that his Palestinian colleague in Masafer

Yatta was "in far greater danger than I am".

There were other Berlinale controversies, but they mostly revolved around the same theme. US filmmaker Ben Russell, who won an award for a documentary on an unrelated topic, wore a keffiyeh as he accepted his award, and used his remarks to slam the genocide and declare that he stood "for a ceasefire in solidarity with all our comrades". Other award recipients sported 'Ceasefire NOW' messages on their backs.

Why should any of this even be an issue in a purported European liberal democracy? The continent is broadly united in its support for Israel, but there are significant exceptions to an unquestioning embrace of Zionist brutality — notably Ireland, given its own experience of colonial occupation, but also Spain, and to a small extent even Belgium and France. Germany, on the other hand, is the second most prolific supplier of weaponry after the US, and was one of the first states to criminalise almost every form of solidarity with the Palestinian quest for self-determination. It goes back to German guilt over World War II in general and the Holocaust in particular. There were limits to West Germany's de-Nazification, but it sought to cover that up by fulsomely backing the Jewish state that emerged in 1948, partly as a direct consequence of the unapologetically horrific Nazi Judeocide. The trend established by West Germany's first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer has lately evolved into a stance across the political establishment, cultural organisations and the media whereby even the mildest criticism of Israel qualifies as antisemitism.

The targets include prominent anti-Zionist Jews, although Muslims

in Germany bear the brunt of accusations — even though some 90 per cent of antisemitic crimes are attributed to the far right. The Alternative for Germany has faced calls for a ban after it was associated with a gathering that drew up a plan for a mass deportation of immigrants, but even Chancellor Olaf Scholz is not entirely averse to a similar idea.

There are concerns that Germany, on its present trajectory, could find itself with the same tendencies of nearly a century ago, but it seems that the fatherland's elite is more focused on serving as a protector for the deformed entity spawned by its dehumanisation of Jews — the apogee of European antisemitism across the preceding decades that sparked the Zionist impulse in the first place.

Exceptionally perceptive Jewish intellectuals in Europe and America, including Hannah Arendt and Albert Einstein, recognised the moral deficiencies of the Israeli state early on. Their warnings went unheeded. That partly explains the rarely wavering Western devotion to its Middle Eastern colonial outpost, which can get away with mass murder while eliciting barely a murmur from its sponsors, benefactors and collaborators.

As younger Jews in the US and Europe wake up to the horrors being perpetrated in their name, the dominant fascist elements of Zionism may be doomed in the longer term — as Joe Biden will probably find out in November.

That doesn't help the Gazans sentenced to death or starvation by the descendants of the victims of Nazism. Nor will German complicity in yet another genocide be readily forgotten or easily forgiven. -- Courtesy Dawn

Gwadar calamity

Dr Noman Ahmed

Weather experts have warned that a new rain system will strike Balochistan in the next few days. This will increase the extent of damage already caused by the recent bout of torrential rains. Thousands of people in Gwadar and the adjacent areas found themselves without shelter as the intense rainfall rendered their modest homes uninhabitable. Lanes, access roads, major arteries and highways were inundated. People could be seen draining the water from their homes and shops. Many lost their already meagre resources. Mass depression prevailed across neighbourhoods.

While various government agencies have sprung into action, it will take a long time and much effort before lives can be rebuilt. One can question how Gwadar is living up to claims of being at the heart of a multimodal development corridor that can turn around Balochistan's — in fact, the entire country's — fortunes. A sleepy town of less than 350,000 people, it is hard to imagine how large-scale regional development can take place to make dreams of national prosperity, on the back of CPEC, a reality.

The existing settlements are not prepared to take the impact of torrential downpours that could become frequent as climate patterns change. High-scale precipitation demands a drainage system that ensures the rapid draining of rainwater. Unfortunately, while Gwadar suffers from the shortage of potable water, it does not have the capacity to store rainwater for extended periods.

The concerned authorities are busy with the Gwadar Smart City Plan meant to give direction to development.

Such a plan will only benefit the people if it conserves and protects existing settlements, introduces critical infrastructure to enhance the quality of life, and up-scales livelihoods. The usual practice of identifying large swathes of land for real estate and its clandestine distribution to favoured stakeholders will not bring the desired relief for Gwadar's residents. If the proposed development process does not factor in the lives of the ordinary and lift them out of poverty, then such development may have little value.

The people of Gwadar also complain about being removed from self-governance. Whether they are development choices or routine administrative matters, the entire hierarchy of the provincial government, federal agencies and military establishment is involved. Decisions about development locations and land allocation and the choice between establishing enterprises or retaining traditional boat-making and fishing are made without consulting the local people, their elders or representatives, leading to protests and agitation.

As new governments begin to take charge at the centre and in Balochistan, a different approach to win back the people of Gwadar and the extended area can be considered. A broad-based steering committee should be constituted comprising members of the provincial and national assemblies from the area, community elders and administration staff to chalk out a relief, rehabilitation and redevelopment strategy. Existing plans and projects can be revised to accommodate the aspect of disaster preparedness. Executing the plans must be done in collaboration

with community elders to revive a sense of local inclusion in the management of local affairs.

Relief and rehabilitation works can best proceed under conditions of peace in the larger coastal area. For this, various stakeholders can come together to restore the trust of the people. A few tough decisions are required. The incoming regime — must announce an amnesty for those they see as creating trouble. The top leaders of all the political forces, within and outside the assemblies, may be invited to dialogue sessions by the provincial government.

The objectives of the dialogue must be on striking a working relationship between the government, political parties and tribal elders; developing a roadmap to stop acts of violence through confidence-building measures; and the preparation of an agenda of negotiation with the centre. This is vital because there are many matters over which no provincial government possesses jurisdiction and authority. The attempt may prove futile if the establishment does not show an open approach.

The process of release of political detainees and locating missing individuals can be initiated by the establishment to convince the other side of its sincerity. Besides, dissenting voices in Gwadar and the extended coastal region must not be shrugged off. The best way forward is to provide political space so that a feeling of participation evolves. No political group can be a security threat if its concerns are genuinely accommodated in the normal political process. Fear and danger only raise their head when such groups are denied a space where they can prove their political worth. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

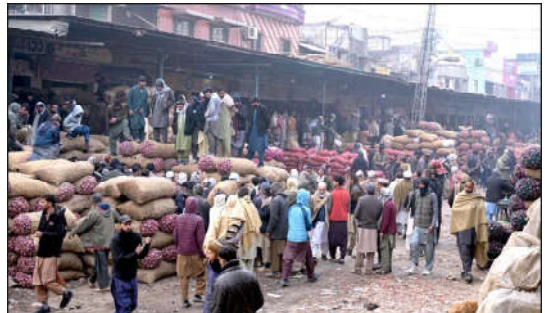
Governor SBP inaugurates SAARCFINANCE Seminar

Transformative Potential of Big Data in Economic Policy

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Mr. Jameel Ahmad delivered the inaugural speech at the SAARCFINANCE Seminar on the 'Potential Role of Big Data in Economic Policy.' The event, held in Islamabad, brought together distinguished delegates, subject matter experts, and esteemed speakers from the SAARC region to discuss the impact and implications of Big Data in shaping economic policies.

Governor SBP emphasized that the unprecedented volume of data generated by digital devices underscore the

potential of effective data utilization in contributing to sustained economic growth, societal welfare, poverty reduction, and improved living standards across the diverse SAARC region. During his speech, Mr. Ahmad shed light on the growing role of Big Data in central banking, financial inclusion, and how the SBP is incorporating Big Data analysis in policymaking. He also shared specific examples of how the central bank uses Big Data analytics for economic analysis, leveraging satellite imagery data, and harnessing the power of machine learning algorithms for fraud detection and prevention.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people purchasing onion at Vegetable and Fruits Market.

SSCI to take up issue professional tax on jewelry sector

PESHAWAR (APP): Acting president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sanaullah Khan said SSCI will take up the issue of imposition of professional tax and Point of Sale in the jewelry sector along with other tax-related issues with FBR and relevant authorities.

The acting chief said SSCI is the only business community forum that has always played a pivotal role in taking up community issues with authorities and resolving them amicably.

Businessmen want to pay taxes but it is essential to make a sizable

reduction in the ratio of various taxes or bring them down to a single digit, Sanaullah Khan said while chairing a meeting of SSCI's Jewelry Standing Committee held here at Chamber House on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by Jewelry Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Patron in Chief, Azizullah Khan Saraf, and provincial Amin Hussain Babar, the business community attached to the jewelry sector, and office bearers of the association from Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan, Takht Bhai, Swat, Kohat, Hangu and others.



ISLAMABAD: Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI and H.E. Albert Khorev, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Kairm Aziz Malik Chairman and Malik Sohail Hussain Chairman Coordination FPCCI addressing Pak-Russia Business Council of FPCCI Business Community.

Country expecting 29.77m metric tons of wheat in normal conditions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The wheat output in the country during the current season is likely to reach over 29.77 million tons, which would further help cement the efforts of the government to achieve sustainable agriculture growth and economic development.

The local output of wheat, which is a vital source of staple food was fixed at 32.11 million metric tons during the crop season (2024-25) as against the domestic requirements of 32.94 million metric tons, said

Imtiaz Ahmad Gopang Food Security Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

The local wheat consumption was estimated at 32.94 million metric tons during the year 2024-25, whereas the estimated carry-forward stock of 3.2 million metric tons will supplement the production of a new crop and be able to fulfil the requirements during the season, he told APP on Wednesday. The wheat cultivation relies heavily on irrigation water, so the

ample water supply as reported by IRSA along with record planting areas indicated the potential for another strong harvest during the crop season 2024-25, he added.

However, the actual production outcomes will depend on factors such as growing conditions and accessibility of essential inputs, particularly fertilizers. Additionally, weather patterns in March and April crucial for the grains' development and maturation will significantly impact the final output, he said adding

that the above-normal rains spell, hailstorms and storms could impact the crop position. He said that according to the Provincial Crop Reporting Services, wheat production for the Punjab Province was forecast at 22.67 million metric tons, and Sindh at 4.16 million metric tons respectively. Meanwhile, the output for the provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan was expected to reach at 1.48 million metric tons and 1.46 million metric tons respectively.

Rupee sheds 04 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Wednesday weakened by 04 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.35 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.31. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.2 and Rs 282.1, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 32 paise to close at Rs 303.40 against the last day's closing of Rs 303.08.

SECP files criminal cases against individuals involved in stock market manipulation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has filed four criminal complaints against individuals involved in manipulating stock prices, including sponsors and brokerage house management.

The Court has admitted all four complaints filed by SECP against the accused individuals, said a press

release issued here on Wednesday.

The accused gained significant profits by manipulating the share prices of three listed companies in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

The SECP reached these conclusions after completing thorough investigations under the Securities Act of 2015.

The investigations established that these

individuals placed high-priced orders and traded with one another to artificially raise the share prices of specific stocks.

They also placed fake buy orders and then cancelled a large number of these transactions, resulting in fictitious quotations to deceive potential investors. The accused also fraudulently misused clients' accounts to place large orders.

Promotion of electric bikes vital to abolish pollution, save expenses: Khawaja

MULTAN (APP): President Anjum Tajraan Pakistan Khawaja Suleman Siddique said introduction of electric bikes in local markets was of vital importance to abolish pollution and reduce expenses on travelling.

He said this while addressing a ceremony in the local market on Wednesday. Amid soaring prices and increasing prices of petrol rates, it has become difficult for common men to afford motorcycles.

The emergence of electric bikes in the market is seen as a positive step towards both

saving costs and reducing pollution. Encouraging the public to opt for electric bikes over petrol-driven motorcycles, he stated that the need for the government to launch similar projects to promote electric bikes among traders, businessmen and other citizens.

He added that electric bikes offer a standard and affordable travel solution, relieving citizens from expensive petrol prices and also mitigating environmental pollution. On this occasion, a good number of local traders were also present.

KPRA conducts training workshop for officials of AG of Pakistan on FABS

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority conducted a one-day training workshop on Automated Deduction of KP Sales Tax on Services through the Financial

Additionally, a thorough question-and-answer session was conducted during the presentation, where trainers and officials of KPRA addressed the queries of the participants



Accounting and Budgeting System (FABS) for the officials of Accountant General of Pakistan on Wednesday at Serena Hotel Peshawar.

The workshop was arranged with the financial assistance of the World Bank-funded KPRMP project.

Trainers from FABS provided a detailed presentation on the workings of FABS in relation to the automatic deduction of KP Sales Tax on Services through the FABS

Director General KPRA Miss Fouzia Iqbal in her address thanked officials of the Accountant General of Pakistan, KPRMP, and FABS for making the workshop possible.

She shed light on the integration of KP Sales Tax on Services in the FABS system, emphasizing that it marks a significant milestone for KPRA and a memorable day.

"It is another step towards the automation of KP Sales Tax on Services.

CM Punjab says: Ramzan package to benefit people at their doorsteps

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced the commencement of the largest-ever Ramzan Nigahban Package in Punjab, fulfilling her promises made in her maiden assembly speech. Addressing a press conference at CM's Office here on Wednesday, she said the Ramzan package, prepared in just nine days, would reach people's doorsteps and benefit them without any botheration. She said that package was aimed at providing swift relief to deserving individuals during the holy month under PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz

Sharif's guidance. "My mission is to provide relief to people at their doorsteps," she added. The chief minister said the initiative involves distributing 65,000 bags with QR codes, benefiting over 30 million people in Punjab. Beneficiaries' data from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) was being merged for saving time. Maryam said and added that the upcoming Punjab Socio-Economic Registry Project would gather comprehensive data for future government interventions. Detailing the

Ramazan relief package items including flour, ghee, sugar, rice, and gram flour, the CM directed the district administrations and the Punjab Food Authority to ensure quality of food items. Random checks on hamper content and digitalised delivery mechanisms with the PITB-developed applications would enhance transparency, she added. Maryam Nawaz said that a digitalised record of distribution of 6.5 million hampers, with a helpline (080002345), established for public feedback and complaints, would ensure timely and fair distribution among genuinely deserving people.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz announcing the Ramadan Package in a press conference at Chief Minister House.

Federal Ombudsman's regional office holds open court at Tank

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Dera's Regional Office of the Federal Ombudsman on Thursday held an open court to address citizens' complaints at Tank district. Regional Head retired Chief Secretary Sang Marjan Khan Mehsood along with Senior Investigation Officer Imran Khan, and Data Control Officer Imran Mehmood addressed the forum. A large number of

citizens attended the open court with complaints against federal organizations including Tribal Electricity Supply Company (TESCO), Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) and Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL).

E-Domicile service starts at Bajaur

PESHAWAR (APP): District administration Bajaur on Wednesday launched E-Domicile Certificate provision facility to address problems of students. The first E-Domicile was issued by District Administration Bajaur in a ceremony that was attended by Deputy Commissioner Bajaur, Anwar-ul-Haq, Deputy Commissioner General, Ali Raza and concerned officials. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner said that E-Domicile has been started at Tehsil level to facilitate students specially those who lives in remote areas and facing difficulties to get domicile adding that it would also save precious time of applicants.

Friends of Police delegation visits PSCA

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of students from Friends of Police, comprising 150 participants from various universities, paid a study visit to the PSCA here on Wednesday. Commander DSP gave a detailed briefing on the functioning of the Authority. The delegation was shown the workings of different departments within Safe City.

Women empowerment key to ensure progressive, inclusive society: First Lady

RAWALPINDI (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Alvi, On Wednesday while emphasizing the importance of women's role in the country's development, said that a progressive and inclusive society could not be possible without empowering women in every sector of life. Addressing an event organized in connection with International Women Day by the Behbud Association of Pakistan, Samina Alvi said it was the responsibility of everybody to ensure a conducive environment for girls and women to provide proper education and training, enabling them to live a life with dignity and respect. Appreciating the role of the association in empowering women, she said that since its inception, the Behbud Association has empowered around one million women by providing skills and training in various fields. She said women comprised half of the total population of the country, and their participation was very important to ensuring the economic development of the country. The first lady pointed out that the women's literacy rate in the country was much lower as compared to the men. She said Pakistan also needed to improve its current rating of 142 out of 147 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index.



RAWALPINDI: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi addressing an event in connection with International Women's Day, at Behbud Association of Pakistan.

Helping deserving people brings peace of mind: Dr Amil

MARDAN (APP): The founder of the Non-Governmental Organization Saath Sabka Development Organization Mardan Dr Amil Mohmand Wednesday said that social service is the way to the survival of humanity. To serve human service without discrimination, service is greatness, it is our duty to provide the necessities of life to the poor, helpless, and destitute. He expressed these thoughts while discussing the distribution of the Ramadan ration package. He said that Saath Sabka Development Organization has provided financial assistance to thousands of beneficiaries, medical treatment, and hundreds of people to their homes since its inception. It has provided employment and God willing, this process will continue, a plan has been made to distribute the Ramadan ration package in a fair manner, for which committees have been formed to compile a list of poor and deserving people and provide them with ration.



PESHAWAR: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) National Assembly Member from NA-1 Chitral, Abdul Latif along with others addresses to media persons during press conference regarding rigging and illegal allocation of certain seats by the Election Commission, held at Peshawar press club.

Jazz holds tree plantation drive as part of carbon sink project

PESHAWAR (APP): Jazz Pakistan's leading digital operator organized a tree plantation drive in the Hayatabad area of Peshawar as part of its nationwide carbon sink project which aims to promote environmental conservation and combat climate change. The ceremony was also attended by Additional D.G. PDA Manzoor Yousaf, Director PDA Sajid Khan, Jazz employees and school children. Speaking on the occasion, DG PDA, lauded Jazz's carbon sink project, saying, "I commend Jazz's dedication towards mitigating carbon emissions, including their remarkable carbon sink project. Captain (Retd.) Khalid Mehmood and Director General (DG) Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) were the chief guests on the

CM felicitates Saraiki community on Culture Day

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the Pakistan is a fragrant bouquet of cultural diversity and Saraiki culture is a beautiful flower of this bouquet. In her message on Saraiki Culture Day, the chief minister extended congratulations to the Saraiki community, saying that sweetness of Saraiki language is Pakistan's valuable asset. "Saraiki Ajarak is my favorite, it is a metaphor of love" she said.

Leader of opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Ibadullah Khan on Wednesday termed the nationwide protest call by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for coming Sunday a "drama" and asked for its immediate withdrawal. He said instead of providing relief to the people, PTI always indulged in negative politics.

Ibad asks PTI to withdraw protest call

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Bench has admitted for hearing the petition filed against usurping basic human rights in the name of security during PSL matches in Rawalpindi cricket stadium. The petition was heard by Justice Jawad Hassan of LHC Rawalpindi bench Wednesday. The court after preliminary hearing of the

PSL matches LHC admits for hearing petition filed against usurping of basic human rights

petition issued notice to the respondents and sought parawise replies. The court issued these orders on the petition of senior lawyer Sajjad Akbar Abbasi. The petitioner has made interior secretary, chief secretary Punjab. Deputy commissioner Rawalpindi, City police officer Rawalpindi, chief traffic officer Rawalpindi and Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board respondents.

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International News

China drops 'peaceful reunification' reference to Taiwan amid tensions

BEIJING: China will boost its defence spending by 7.2 per cent this year, fuelling a military budget that has more than doubled under President Xi Jinping's 11 years in office as Beijing hardens its stance on Taiwan, according to official reports on Tuesday. The increase mirrors the rate presented in last year's budget and again comes in well above the government's economic growth forecast for this year. China also officially adopted tougher language against Taiwan as it released the budget figures, dropping the mention of "peaceful reunification" in a government report delivered by Premier Li Qiang at the opening of the National People's Congress (NPC), on Tuesday. Tensions have risen sharply in recent years over Taiwan, the democratically ruled island that China claims as its own, and elsewhere across East Asia as regional military deployments rise. Li Mingjiang, a defence scholar at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore, said that despite China's struggling economy, Taiwan is a major consideration in Beijing's defence spending. "China is showing

that in the coming decade it wants to grow its military to the point where it is prepared to win a war if it has no choice but to fight one," Li said. Since Xi became president and commander-in-chief more than a decade ago, the defence budget has ballooned to 1.67 trillion yuan (\$230 billion) this year from 720 billion yuan in 2013. The percentage rise in military spending has consistently outpaced the annual domestic economic growth target during his time in office. This year the growth target for 2024 is about 5pc, similar to last year's goal, according to the government report.

Commercial surveillance tools "increasingly present a security risk to the United States and our citizens," said Treasury Under Secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence Brian Nelson. In particular, the Intellexa Consortium was founded in 2019 and served as a "marketing label" for companies offering commercial spyware and surveillance tools. The tools, the Treasury Department said, are packaged as a suite under the brand-name "Predator" spyware, able to infiltrate devices without user interaction.



RAFAH: Palestinian children receive cooked food rations as part of a volunteer youth initiative in the southern Gaza Strip.

Hungary president signs Sweden's NATO membership ratification

BUDAPEST: Hungary's President Tamas Sulyok has signed the bill that approved Sweden's accession to the NATO military alliance, the president's office said on Tuesday. Lawmakers approved Sweden's NATO accession on Feb. 26, clearing the last hurdle before the historic step by the Nordic country, whose neutrality lasted through two world wars and the Cold War. Stockholm abandoned its non-alignment policy for greater safety within the North Atlantic Treaty Or-

US imposes sanctions on members of spyware group

WASHINGTON: US authorities announced sanctions on Tuesday on parties associated with Intellexa Consortium, citing their role in making and distributing commercial spyware used to target US officials, journalists and others. Commercial surveillance tools "increasingly present a security risk to the United States and our citizens," said Treasury Under Secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence Brian Nelson. In particular, the Intellexa Consortium was founded in 2019 and served as a "marketing label" for companies offering commercial spyware and surveillance tools. The tools, the Treasury Department said, are packaged as a suite under the brand-name "Predator" spyware, able to infiltrate devices without user interaction.

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BEIJING: Workers replenish Chinese President Xi Jinping's teacups during the opening session of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People.

Russia, China plan nuclear power plant on moon

MOSCOW: Russia and China are considering putting a nuclear power plant on the moon from 2033-35, Yuri Borisov, the head of Russia's space agency Roscosmos said on Tuesday, something he said could one day allow lunar settlements to be built. Borisov, a former deputy defence minister, said that Russia and China had been jointly working on a lunar programme and that Moscow was able to contribute with its expertise on "nuclear space energy". "Today we are seriously considering a project — somewhere at the turn of 2033-2035 - to deliver and install a power unit on

the lunar surface together with our Chinese colleagues," Borisov said. Solar panels would not be able to provide enough electricity to power future lunar settlements, he said, while nuclear power could. "This is a very serious challenge...it should be done in automatic mode, without the presence of humans," he said of the possible plan. Borisov spoke also of Russian plans to build a nuclear-powered cargo spaceship. He said all the technical questions concerning the project had been solved apart from finding a solution on how to cool the nuclear reactor.

Israel 'to allow' worshippers access to Al Aqsa as in 'previous years'

JERUSALEM: Israel will allow as many worshippers to access Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem during the first week of Ramazan as in previous years, the prime minister's office said on Tuesday. "In the first week of Ramazan, worshippers will

be allowed to enter the Temple Mount, in similar numbers to those in previous years," the statement said, using the Jewish term for the site. "Every week there will be a situation assessment in terms of security and safety and a decision will be made accordingly," it added.

Blast rocks security base in Afghanistan

FAIZABAD: A blast shook a Taliban military base near the airport in Faizabad, the capital of Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan province, but without causing casualties, officials said on Tuesday. The Taliban official confirmed on condition of anonymity that an explosion had occurred at the base but would not provide further details. A roadside IED exploded near the base but no one was killed or wounded, Badakhshan police spokesman Ehsanullah Kamgar told AFP. He said the authorities suspected the IED was not new but rather left over from before the Taliban takeover in 2021.

Bezos dethrones Musk to become richest man

WASHINGTON: Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has taken back his spot as the world's richest man, dethroning Elon Musk on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Bezos' net worth stands at \$200 billion, according to the tracker, surpassing the Tesla chief's \$198bn. Musk, who also heads X (formerly Twitter) and SpaceX, has seen his riches fall by more than \$30b as Tesla's share price has dropped 25 per cent.

Gaza ceasefire talks in doldrums

CAIRO: Hamas negotiators stayed in Cairo for a third day of ceasefire talks on Tuesday in an attempt to halt the fighting in the Gaza Strip in time for the fasting month of Ramazan, free Israeli hostages and stave off famine. A 40-day ceasefire in the conflict would allow some hostages captured by Pales-ti-nian fighters in the October attack, while aid to Gaza would be increased and families able to return to abandoned homes. "The delegation will remain in Cairo on Tuesday for more talks, they are expected to wrap up this round later today," a Hamas official told Reuters. Three security sources from host and mediator Egypt said the warring sides were sticking to demands that had held up an agreement. The Egyptians have remained in contact with the Israelis despite the absence of an Israeli delegation. Earlier, senior Hamas official Bassam Naim said the group had presented a draft ceasefire agreement, and was now waiting for a response from Israel. "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't want to reach an agreement and the ball now is in the Americans' court" to press him, Naim said. Israel has declined to comment publicly on the talks but a senior Israeli official said: "Israel is making every effort to reach an agreement. We are awaiting a response from Hamas." A source had told Reuters earlier that Israel was staying away because Hamas had refused to furnish a list of all hostages who are still alive. Naim said this was impossible without a ceasefire as hostages were scattered across the war zone and held by separate groups.

Gaza children may not survive famine, warns WHO chief

LONDON (Online): Children in the besieged Palestinian enclave of Gaza may not be able to survive a famine there, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday. "Children who survived bombardment but may not survive a famine," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X. He called for allowing more humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip as well as a ceasefire there. Israel has waged a deadly military offensive on the Gaza Strip since an Oct. 7, 2023 attack by the Palestinian group Hamas, which Tel Aviv says killed nearly 1,200 people. More than 30,700 Palestinians have since been killed and 72,156 others injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities. Israel has also imposed a crippling blockade on the Gaza Strip, leaving its population, particularly residents of northern Gaza, on the verge of starvation. The Israeli war has pushed 85% of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

Shehbaz Sharif emphasizes robust planning to tackle natural calamities

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has emphasized robust planning and institutional structure to tackle natural calamities.

He was talking to the affecteds of rains and floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during his visit to Peshawar today.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

He said Pakistan has faced disastrous floods during 2022 and recently

the torrential rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa led to death of about forty people.

The Prime Minister appreciated the role of Provincial Disaster Management Authority, the chief secretary, district administrations and all those who contributed in the effort to rescue and rehabilitate the rain affected people.

He said the compensation amount has already been distributed among the injured and heirs of the deceased.

Presidential candidates urged to appoint only MPs as polling agents

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has instructed the candidates participating in presidential election to appoint only parliamentarians as their polling agents.

An ECP spokesman said in a statement that Presidential candidates must appoint only parliamentarians as polling agents.

Furthermore, for the 2024 Presidential Election,

candidates are required to ensure that their polling agents are members of the national or provincial assemblies, following Rule 32 of the Presidential Election Rules.

Additionally, Rule 15 permits candidates to designate polling agents before polling begins, who will oversee both the polling and counting procedures, with the candidate notifying the presiding officer in writing of this designation.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah exchanges views with the Consul General of UAE, Bakheet Ateeq Al-Remeithi during meeting held at CM House in Karachi.

Mushahid requests opening the border with Afghanistan, Iran for trade

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed on Wednesday requested the upper house play its role in opening borders with neighboring countries, especially Afghanistan and Iran, for trade.

Speaking on the point of order in the upper house, the senator said that a delegation from Afghanistan has arrived in Pakistan for the request to open up the border for trade.

He said, "The trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is around 5 billion US dollars, but due to the closure of borders, entire business activity is closed, due to which Afghan traders are facing difficulty."

He said, "Three landlocked countries, including Afghanistan, and Tajikistan need land opening opportunities through Gawadar, but unfortunately, Pakistan's relations with its neighboring countries are not satisfactory."

He said, "Pakistan has been a host country for all its neighboring countries for 40 years, and the same role must continue in the future for prosperity and peace in the region."

He requested the chairman and deputy chairman of the senate to play their roles to facilitate a meeting of Afghan traders and to take up the issue at the highest level for the opening up of borders.



KARACHI: Judicial Member of Sindh Human Rights Commission, Justice Retired Arshad Noor Khan along with his team inspection visit of the 200-patient beds in Sindh Government Hospital Karachi UP Moor in New Karachi.

Ruling coalition secure two-third majority in National Assembly

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and its allies have secured a two-third majority in the National Assembly (NA), following the allocation of reserved seats which were claimed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

The coalition government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, which includes the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Mutahida Quomi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Zia (PML-Z) and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), comprises 229 members in the lower house.

To gain two-third majority in the 336-seat of national assembly, a government needs the support of 224 lawmakers, thereby strengthening the ruling coalition's control over governance and its capability to enact legislative agendas effectively.

The PML-N com-

mands on 123 seats in the lower house, in which 75 won in the February 8 elections and nine independents who later joined the party. After the allocation of 23 reserved seats (17 for women, 4 for minorities), the total reached at 107.

Following the election commission of Pakistan (ECP) ruling on remaining reserved seats, the party clinched 15, out of 20 reserved for women and 1 out of 3 reserved for minorities, cementing its status as the largest party in the national assembly.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) holds 73 seats including 54 general seats, 16 women and another three reserved seats for minorities. Followed by the Mutahida Quami Movement (MQM) with 22 seats, including 17 general seats and five reserved seats — four women and one minority. Furthermore, the PML-Q has obtained five seats including three general, one independent and one seat reserved for women was also allocated to it.



PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding recent torrential rains and heavy snowfall and the ongoing rescue and relief activities for the affecteds.

OIC urges probe of war crimes against Palestinians; voices concern over India's rights abuses in Kashmir

GENEVA (APP): Pakistan, speaking for Islamic countries, has underscored the need for investigating Israeli war crimes against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank to pave the way for accountability.

"It is high time that violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law including war crimes committed against the Palestinian people are investigated and accountability follows," Ambassador Bilal Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN offices in Geneva, told the Human Rights Council during its general debate on Tuesday.

At the same time, the Pakistani envoy, who was speaking on behalf of the OIC countries, voiced

"deep anguish" over the deteriorating human rights situation in Indian occupied Kashmir.

"We urge India to comply with the applicable UN Security Council resolutions and implement recommendations addressed to it in the two Kashmir reports by OHCHR, the UN human rights office, which need to be updated," the OIC statement said. "The Council must pay attention to consistent observations made by SPMHs (Special Procedure Mandate Holders) on the human rights violations, impunity and draconian laws in the occupied territory."

In the statement, Ambassador Ahmad strongly condemned all crimes committed by the Israeli Occupation Forces in Occupied

Palestinian Territory (OPT), and called for implementing provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and reminded all states of their responsibilities in this regard.

"We reiterate our longstanding call for upholding respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the OPT, including in East Jerusalem," he said.

"We also call for reversal of all measures aimed at institutionalizing illegal occupation, apartheid and colonial settlement enterprise in OPT."

The OIC also called on the Council to work towards securing justice and accountability for the Rohingya people, including through their safe, dignified,

and voluntary return to their homes in Myanmar. The OIC, he said, reiterated its full solidarity with Bangladesh and supports calls for assistance to the country in efforts to achieve a durable solution.

"The OIC condemns the damage and loss of properties inflicted by Armenia including cultural heritage and religious sites in the territories of Azerbaijan liberated from the occupation," the statement said.

"The OIC reaffirms its full support to the Government and people of Azerbaijan and call upon the international community to extend assistance to Azerbaijan for the safe and dignified return of Azerbaijani IDPs (internally displaced persons).

Saudi delegation visits at SFIC for investments in various sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high level delegation of Al Ajan Holding Group of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia visited Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFIC) here today. The group was headed by His Excellency Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz Alajlan, Deputy Chairman, along with members representing various sectors, operating under the ambit of Al Ajan Holding Group, said a press release.

The delegation was warmly received by officials of SIFIC and comprehensive briefs were given covering potential and investment opportunities in different sectors. The delegation showed great interest in exploring investment opportunities in Pakistan under the umbrella of SIFIC. The visit underscores longstanding brotherly relations between Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which are transforming into multi-domain cooperation through participation of public.

Act of not giving reserved seats to SIC in Punjab challenged

LAHORE (Online): The act of not giving reserved seats to Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) in Punjab has been challenged in Lahore High Court (LHC).

Azhar Siddique counsel for the petitioner took the plea that Election Commission (EC) is neither tribunal nor a court. The reserved seats should be given to SIC in proportion to seats in assembly.

It makes no difference if SIC has contested election or otherwise. This act of EC is tantamount to amend the constitution.

The EC decision is overstepping the powers delegated to EC.

The petitioner requested the court to declare null and void section 104 of Election act and rule 94.

15-member KP cabinet takes oath of office

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Fifteen Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ministers who have been inducted into the provincial cabinet took oath in a prestigious ceremony held at the Governor's House on Wednesday.

The induction of the ministers into the provincial cabinet was notified by the KP government's administration department following a summary of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, approved by KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

The members include Arshad Ayub Khan, Shakeel Ahmad, Fazal Hakim Khan, Muhammad Adnan Qadri, Aqib Ullah Khan, Muhammad Sajjad, Meena

Khan, and Fazal Shakoor.

Nazir Ahmad Abbasi, Pakhtoon Yar Khan, Aftab Alam Khan Afridi, Khaleeq Ur Rehman, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Faisal Khan Tarakai, and Muhammad Zahir Shah are also part of the cabinet.

Subsequently, the newly-elected KP CM Gandapur also sent a summary to the governor to recommend appointments of his advisers, which was also approved by the governor.

Following the CM's advice, five advisers have been appointed, including Syed Fakhar Jehan, Muzamil Aslam, Muhammad Ali Saif, Mashal Azam, and Zahid Chanzeb.



ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of Saudi Arabia's Al-Ajan Holding Group visited Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFIC).

Treasury benches in Senate There should be no room for caretaker govt in constitution

ISLAMABAD (Online): Treasury benches while expressing their grave concerns over the poor performance of caretaker governments and drifting the country to crisis by them have demanded to eliminate the role of caretaker governments.

Senator Sadia Abbasi while speaking on point of order in Senate Wednesday said this is opportunity for the new government to remove the flaws prevailing

in the democracy.

She said there should be no space for caretaker governments in the constitution. Governments come in the world and they themselves hold election. There is no concept of caretaker government.

Senator Irfan Siddiqi said the question is not performance of the caretaker government. In principle there should be no room for caretaker governments in constitution

PPP, PTI, and PDM dragged country into debt: Siraj

LAHORE (PR): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq on Wednesday asserted the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) had "dragged the country into debt."

Addressing the public gathering in Mandi Bahauddin, Haq said: "The corrupt investors, feudalists had dragged the country into a quagmire."

"Now the poor segment of the country will have to bear the brunt of the loans," he added.

Haq on Friday emphasised the need for the election audit through the "independent" judicial commission.

Expressing his thoughts, Haq said: "There is a dire need to accept the decision of the masses."

LHC orders to remove name of Sheikh from ECL

RAWALPINDI (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) Rawalpindi bench has ordered to remove name of former interior minister Sheikh Rashid from Exit Control List (ECL).

A division bench of LHC Rawalpindi bench comprising Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan and justice Mirza Waqas Rauf has announced the judgment.

The court has directed the petitioner be not restrained from going abroad.

Sheikh Rashid along with his lawyers Sardar Abdul Razaq and Sardar Shehbaz Khan were present in the court.

Additional interior secretary and NAB prosecutor appeared in the court.

The counsel for the petitioner told the court interior secretary did not appear despite being summoned by the court.

Saraiki culture testament to diversity defining Pakistan: Bilawal

MULTAN (APP): The Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday extended his heartfelt greetings to the people of Saraiki on Saraiki Culture Day and to the entire nation at large.

The PPP chairman, in his message, said that Wasebi is the cradle of a rich heritage, vibrant language, and resilient people. "Saraiki people, with their warmth, hospitality, and deep-rooted cultural values, exemplify the essence of unity in diversity," he added.

Mr Bilawal empha-

sized that Saraiki Culture is a testament to the diversity that defines Pakistan. He added that the strength of any society lies in its ability to embrace and celebrate its diversity.

He reiterated the PPP's commitment to fostering an inclusive and pluralistic society, where every culture is recognized, respected, and celebrated.

He urged: "Let us reaffirm our commitment to promoting cultural harmony and understanding among all communities across the country, says a new release issued here.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir NI (M) calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

ECP seeks additional PML-N lists for NA women's seats

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) sought more lists of women from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to allocate nine additional National Assembly reserve seats after their initial list was exhausted.

The PML-N's priority list for the National Assembly (NA) in Punjab has been depleted, prompting the ECP to ask for nomination papers from nine more women affiliated with the PML-N. These nomination papers will be accepted by the PML-N had "dragged the country into debt."

Addressing the public gathering in Mandi Bahauddin, Haq said: "The corrupt investors, feudalists had dragged the country into a quagmire."

"Now the poor segment of the country will have to bear the brunt of the loans," he added.

Haq on Friday emphasised the need for the election audit through the "independent" judicial commission.

Expressing his thoughts, Haq said: "There is a dire need to accept the decision of the masses."

The petitioners contended how can two results of one constituency be issued.



HYDERABAD: Residents of Qasimabad are holding protest demonstration against killing of Zeeshan Jatoi and demanding justice for him, at Hyderabad press club.

Overseas training for softball players will be sponsored by Combaxx Sports: Omar Saeed

KARACHI (APP): Omar Saeed, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Combaxx Sports, an international brand of sports equipment has said that softball is becoming the favourite sport of the youth in the country.

He our organization will do its best to improve the infrastructure of this sport in Pakistan and for the welfare of the players.

As a technical partner, every year Combaxx Sports will sponsor two athletes (one male and one female) nominated by the Softball Federation of Pakistan for training abroad.

He expressed these views on the occasion of a meeting with the delegation led by Softball Federation of Pakistan President Asif Azeem, Senior Vice President of the Federation Professor Dr. Farhan Essa, Chairperson Yasmin Hyder, Vice Presidents Farah Saeed, Tehmina Asif, Dr. Hina Jamshed, Abdul Wahab Sultan, Director of Siccotel and Muhammad Zubair Macha, General Manager of Combaxx Sports were also present on the occasion.

CEO Combaxx Sports Omar Saeed said that we want to see sports flourishing in the country and we wish that softball players, like other sports, can get world-class equipment in their country.

Combaxx Sports will provide scholarships to 5 deserving softball players every month by providing financial support in addition to an annual awards ceremony for players who have won medals for Pakistan at the national and international levels and a women's sports event will also be sponsored every year.

President of the Federation Asif Azeem said that becoming a technical partner of Combaxx Sports, coming forward to sponsor the players is a welcome process and an honour for the softball federation.

This will not only provide the talented players with world-class training and coaching opportunities in foreign countries but also provide financial support and encouragement to the deserving players by giving them monthly financial help as well.