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Extends congratulations in first letter US to stand with Pakistan in tackling global, regional challenges, Biden tells PM

Says US will continue to forge a strong partnership between both nations

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of the United States Joe Biden, in his first communication with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after assumption of his office, conveyed his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the newly elected government of Pakistan.

In his letter to the prime minister, President Biden reiterated the US' unwavering commitment to

standing alongside Pakistan in confronting the most pressing challenges facing the world and the region.

He also emphasized the shared vision of prioritizing public health protection, economic development, and education, affirming the commitment to advancing these goals in tandem, a press release of Prime Minister Office said on

Friday.

Highlighting the significance of the enduring partnership between the peoples of the United States and Pakistan, President Biden said the partnership was critical to ensuring the security of the world and the people.

Moreover, President Biden emphasized the continued collaboration between the two na-

tions under the US-Pakistan Green Alliance Framework, aiming to bolster environmental improvements and sustainable development initiatives.

He also assured to continue support for Pakistan's endeavors in sustainable agriculture, water management, and recovery efforts following the devastating 2022 floods.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on measures against the spectrum of illegal activities.



Sindh Governor inaugurates latest machine at JDC Free Lab

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori inaugurated the world's most advanced machine at JDC Free Lab, the Snipe Diagnostic CX8 capable of performing 300 blood tests in an hour.

The Governor said that the role of JDC in the welfare of the people is admirable and as a result of this spirit of humanitarian services, Zafar Abbas was awarded Tamgha-e-Imtiaz.

He said that we all should cooperate with JDC and other NGOs. JDC is taking initiative in every sector which is commendable, free transport service, computer courses and education by the organization for the convenience of people, the services in the sector are also commendable, he said.

PM directs for vigorously pursuing initiatives against spectrum of illegal activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday chaired a meeting on measures against spectrum of illegal activities here.

Members of the Federal Cabinet, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Provincial Chief Ministers and high-level government officials were present in the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was "Measures against Spectrum of illegal activities & Criminal Mafias". The participants were briefed in detail on steps taken against the criminal mafias, smuggling, hoarding, money laundering, power theft and repatriation of illegal foreigners etc.

The participants acknowledged the importance of such actions and their

positive impact on the economy and well being of the people of Pakistan.

The meeting showed firm resolve to take action against smugglers, hoarders and market manipulators, who have impacted the economic trajectory and to provide immediate relief to common citizens.

The meeting gave approval of agreements among Federal and Provincial governments on Anti-Power Theft policy, restructuring of Power Distribution Companies on modern lines, installation of Smart meters for full eradication of Power Theft and ordered strict action against the corrupt officers.

Chief of the Army Staff assured unwavering resolve of Pakistan Army to support government's initiatives aimed at economic recovery of the country.

President urges int'l community to ensure protection of Palestinian civilians in Gaza Strip

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has urged the international community to make efforts for free flow of humanitarian assistance to Gaza and ensure protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.

He was talking to Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan Ahmed Jawad Rabei who called on him in Islamabad on Friday.

The President said Pakistan has historic ties with Palestine, and would continue to stand by its Palestinian brothers and raise its voice at all fora.

He lauded the bravery and resilience of the Palestinian people for their long struggle against Israeli occupation.

The President said Pakistan will send additional relief goods, includ-

ing food and medicine, to the Palestinian people.

The Ambassador highlighted the atrocities and reign of terror unleashed by the Israeli forces against innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

He appreciated Pakistan's support in the field of education as over

50,000 Palestinians have graduated in various disciplines from educational institutions in Pakistan.

He also conveyed the warm regards of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and thanked Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas for his consistent support and solidarity with the Palestinian people.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Ahmed Jawad Rabei, calls on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

China joins probe into deadly suicide attack

Culprits of Shangla attack will be brought to justice: Mohsin Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (Online): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said that the real culprits of Shangla attack will be brought to justice.

He gave the assurance to the special investigation team that came from China during a meeting at the Chinese embassy in Islamabad.

The Interior Minister briefed the Chinese investigation team about the progress made so far in the investigation into the incident. Measures pertaining to the protection of Chinese nationals and overall secu-

urity were also discussed on the occasion.

The Interior Minister also met with the Chinese Ambassador and updated him on the probe into Shangla incident.

Meanwhile China's inter-departmental working group has carried out comprehensive emergency response work with the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and the relevant enterprises in the wake of the Dasu terrorist attack, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said on Friday.

Pakistan to continue political, diplomatic support to Kashmiris: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan will continue to extend its moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiri people for the just and peaceful settlement of longstanding Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the Foreign Office spokesperson revealed that the Indian occupation authorities are reportedly set to auction some blocks of Lithium reserves, discovered in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

that corporations from outside the occupied region would be awarded the contracts to exploit this valuable resource that belongs to the Kashmiri people, the FO spokesperson said, adding that these measures by the occupation authorities to deprive Kashmiris of their right to natural resources are illegal and exploitative.

IIOJK must not be deprived of its natural resources.

The people of Kashmir have the foremost right over the wealth of their homeland, including precious metals like Lithium, she maintained.

Finance Minister: Pakistan to seek extended IMF program by June

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Pakistan will likely sign a staff-level agreement (SLA) for an extended IMF program by the end of this fiscal year, namely, before the end of June 2024. He said talks would begin in mid-April.

"We are hopeful that by the time we wrap up this fiscal year i.e. end June to early July, we reach at least a staff-level agreement with the IMF," Aurangzeb said while talking to reporters at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) where a gong ceremony was held to welcome the finance minister on Friday.

Bibi Aseefa elected unopposed from NA-207, NawabShah

LARKANA (APP): Daughter of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari elected unopposed National Assembly member on NA 207, NawabShah seat of by-election.

According to Returning officer and Additional Deputy Commissioner Ali Sher Jamali issued form 47 in which three candidates Abdul Rasool Brohi, Amanullah Solangi and Miraj Ahmed of NA 207, NawabShah seat of by-election on Friday in before the Returning officer.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb talking to media during his visit to Utility Stores Corporation to oversee the implementation of the enhanced Ramadan Relief Package.

Home Minister for tightening security of mosques, important buildings

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar on Friday ordered to ensure tight security of mosques, Imambarghas, public private and other important buildings in the holy month of Ramadan.

He directed that the solid security measures should be ensured in mosques, Imambarghas and other open places.

The Minister said that

vigilant security steps be made possible for the protection of the citizens on the occasion of all Friday prayer gatherings.

He said that all sensitive and important public places, government and private important buildings be put on high security alert.

He also directed for sweeping and clearing of all important places by bomb disposal squad.

Cabinet okays 3-year term for Lt Gen Munir Afsar as Nadra Chairman

Caretaker govt in 2023 initially appointed Afsar as NADRA Chairman until further orders

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Cabinet on Friday gave the green light to the appointment of Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar as Chairman of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) for a three-year term.

On October 2, the Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar-led caretaker government initially appointed Lt. Gen. Muhammad Munir Afsar as NADRA Chairman until further orders.

Following delibera-

tions and considerations, sources within the government have revealed that the federal government has now officially endorsed his appointment for a tenure of three years.

The approval of this appointment came through the circulation of a summary from the Ministry of Interior, the Federal Cabinet, and cognizant of the need for robust governance structures, also sanctioned the inclusion of Rule Seven A in the NADRA Rules 2020.

Ban imposed on use of red carpets in govt functions as per PM directives

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif while taking stern notice of use of red carpets during the visits of federal ministers and senior authorities and government functions has expressed annoyance over it.

According to cabinet division PM has ordered to impose ban on use of red carpet besides declaring it non disagreeable act. Cabinet division said ban has been imposed on use of red carpet in the light of PM directives. Red carpet will be used only in diplomatic receptions and it will not be used in any function.

Youn-e-Ali: Educational institutes in Sindh to remain closed on April 1

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh School Education and Literacy Department has declared April 01 (Monday) Ramadan 21 as holiday on account of 'Youn-e-Ali' for the all public and private sector educational institutions in the Sindh. This was announced after the approval of the competent authority as per decision taken in the meeting of Sub-Committee of Steering Committee held on November 13, 2023.

Finance Minister says: Ramazan Package enhanced from 7.5 billion to Rs. 12.5 billion

KARACHI (APP): Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had enhanced Ramazan Package amount from Rs. 7.5 billion to 12.5 billion rupees so that people belonging to vulnerable segment of the society could be provided essential items on subsidized rates as compared to the open market.

He said this, while talking to media persons during his visit to a Utility Store here in the Defence area.

Finance Minister said under the Ramazan package, apart from Utility stores, 1200 mobile points were also set up to provide essential items to the people at their respective areas. He said there will be no compromise on the quality of the food items being sold through the Utility Stores.

Responding to a suggestion regarding donations from philanthropists to

Utility Stores Corporation, the Minister termed it a good proposal and said as philanthropists of this city always generously helped the poor people and they must donate money to Utility Stores for the purpose.

Aurangzeb said there was a wrong impression that IMF was against the subsidies but the fact is that International Monetary Fund is against un-targeted subsidies while it wants the targeted subsidies be enhanced. Finance Minister said exports has to be our total focus because through it country can earn foreign exchange reserves. He said Pakistan is an agriculture country and it must not import agriculture related commodities.

Citing the wheat yield target, he said now our country was producing 26 m tons of wheat and if country enhances its yield target to over 40 m tons annually, it would become self sufficient.

DG Rangers chairs security meeting to assess law and order situation

KARACHI (APP): A high level security meeting was convened at the Headquarters Pakistan Rangers Sindh under the chairmanship of Director General (DG) Rangers Sindh Major General Azhar Waqas to assess the overall law and order situation in the city.

According to Rangers spokesperson on Friday, high-ranking officials from various departments including Commissioner Karachi, Special Branch, DIGP - CTD, Joint DG Intelligence Bureau, DIGPs of Special Branch, East, South, West, CIA, Traffic, Rangers, and sensitive institutions participated in the conference.

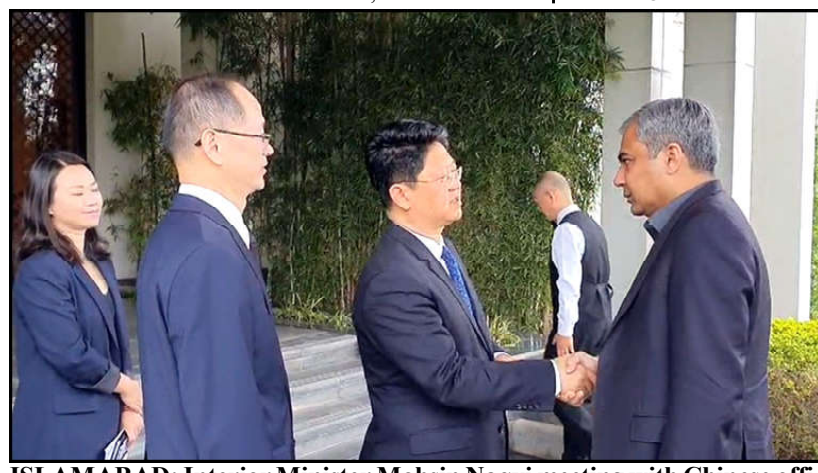
During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on the special security measures for the martyrdom day of Hazrat

Ali (A.S), Easter, Ramzan's last ten days, and Eid-ul-Fitr, with confirmation of actions to be taken in this regard.

The conference emphasized on intensified patrols to curb street crime, increased snap-checking, and formation of a joint action plan utilizing modern technology for the apprehension of criminals.

It was stressed in the meeting that in light of the directives issued, utmost efforts will be made to ensure full compliance with existing laws and codes of conduct.

Law enforcement agencies, on the occasion, reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the security situation, with a stern focus on curbing any form of religious intolerance, forced conversions, extortion, and extremism.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi meeting with Chinese officials at Chinese Embassy.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Biden letter to Shahbaz Sharif & correspondence-New turn in Pak-US relations

Undoubtedly, it is new turn in the relations of Pakistan and United States when the first diplomatic correspondence took place between US president and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Joe Biden wherein it was vowed that Washington will "continue to stand with Pakistan" in tackling the "most pressing global and regional challenges".

This is the first communication between a US president and Pakistani leader in a long time. The letter also holds significance as Islamabad's ties with the White House were strained after the cipher saga and allegation levelled by the former ruling party — Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Biden, in his letter, wrote, "The enduring partnership between our nations remains critical to ensuring the security of our people—and people around the world—and the United States will continue to stand with Pakistan to tackle the most pressing global and regional challenges of our time."

"That includes advancing our shared vision for a future of greater health security, economic growth, and access to education for all."

"Through our US-Pakistan 'Green Alliance' framework, we will also continue to strengthen our climate resilience, support sustainable agriculture and water management, and assist with Pakistan's recovery from the devastating floods in 2022," he added.

President Biden stated the United States remains committed to working with Pakistan to protect human rights and promote progress. Together, we will continue to forge a strong partnership between our nations, and close bond between our people, he concluded.

After the formation of the new government led by PM Shehbaz, both countries came closer after an improvement in ties as an increase was witnessed in bilateral engagements.

While it is very important development between the two countries with US has taken lead by writing official letter to the Premier Shahbaz Sharif, it is also unavoidable to strengthen the bilateral relations further.

One must appreciate the correspondence between Biden and Shahbaz hoping it would bear fruit in time to come.

Materialistic metaphysics

Ghulam Shabbir

This modern civilisation, which has attained for man unprecedented power, progress, and prosperity, has an inherent design fault that inexorably leads to crisis after crisis since it is itself a product of violent reaction against revelation.

Whether we agree or disagree with the intellectual foundations, norms, secular ethics and values of this modern civilisation, we all are sharing and are destined to share its ultimate crisis just as we are sharing its fruits. When Descartes' declaration that "reason can stand on its own" became the leitmotif of European civilisation, pure reason edged out religion. Thus, this Enlightenment movement triggered the Scientific Revolution, whose persistent dynamic impulse brought about the Industrial Revolution. Nascent capitalism facilitated this revolution for its own advantage and helped spread materialism that might be termed both a boon and bane of Western modernity. On the one hand, it brought unprecedented power and prosperity to humanity, and on the other hand it deprived man of his moral anchor.

Now, the hubris of modern man was about to unleash a mix of constructive and destructive capabilities. With religion reduced to a relic of the past, the advent of cannibalistic capitalism — ie, the emergence of corrupt socioeconomic structures with laissez-faire morality — was a foregone conclusion. Equipped with the faculty of creative knowledge man was destined to master the laws and forces of nature. But mastering that 'mastery' which comes into the purview of revelation

was beyond his ken.

What could religion do to rein in man's lust for power and self-aggrandisement? A study of civilisations shows that shorn of morality, man could be the most dangerous species on earth. His self-destructive genius puts the survival of the world and life in it at stake. Life on earth has witnessed extinction five times, the fifth time about 60 million years ago. Now we must consider of what consequence terribly excessive carbon emissions and destructive nuclear arsenals are and what havoc they are about to wreak on our planet. Noam Chomsky says: "Nuclear arsenals and climate change are an ample testimony to the fact that man is an evolutionary error." His remark echoes a striking similarity with the divine judgement at the time of creation. "Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant" (33:72).

This "Trust" is bestowal of faculty of reason and volition on man to establish a just moral social world order. The Quran invites people of the book, ie, Jews and Christians (3:64) to share this responsibility. Hence, today we are "reaping" what was laid down in the intellectual foundations of the European Renaissance, Christian Reformation Movement and Peace of Westphalia, which alienated religion from the socioeconomic and political spheres. The ethical hollowiness of modern man has rendered his vision myopic and priorities so warped and distorted that rudderless in the sea of unquenchable desires, he is probing in the dark.

Man is zeroing in on Mars while the affairs of the earth are becoming ever more complicated and dangerously intractable. Pure intellect has successfully defeated the moral purpose of life, turning modern man's endeavours and achievements into Frankenstein's monster. So, be it the rapid deterioration and decomposition of man's social life and/or ecological disasters, both are the outcome of the corrupt socioecon-omic structures based on materialistic metaphysics.

The Quran offers man a complete programme for self-reformation which is sufficient to save our civilisation. The plight of man at the advent of Islam, as portrayed in vivid imagery in the Quran, was highlighted thus: "Corruption has appeared on land and in the sea as an outcome of what men's hands have wrought" (30:41).

Nuclear arsenals and climate challenges are the outcome of what modern man's hands have wrought due to his unbridled acquisitiveness, self-aggrandisement and military-cum-cultural and epistemological hegemonies, with corrupt socioeconomic structures their main props. The panacea for all these maladies lies in the return of religion to socioeconomic and political affairs of the globe.

At the time of creation, God set a challenge to man that the equality which all people share in the eyes of God should reflect in the socioeconomic and political order.

Failure to live up to the challenge is not only of Muslims; it is, in fact, the failure of entire mankind. Are we awake to this reality? -- Courtesy Dawn

Our Indian mirror

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

Soon after the Babri Masjid was demolished by Hindu nationalist mobs in December 1992, Fahmida Riaz wrote an epic poem entitled Tum bilkul hum jaise nikle. Three decades later, her words ring truer than ever.

For progressives in Pakistan, India has often represented the possibility that the postcolonial state can be democratised, that ideologies like socialism and secularism can be mainstreamed, and that relations with the world can be guided by principles such as non-alignment and anti-imperialism.

But over the past few years, as Pakistan has been pulverised by various iterations of 'hybrid' militarised rule, it has become increasingly difficult to look towards our neighbour with any degree of envy. In June, India will go to the polls and all indications point to a victory for Narendra Modi and his BJP. Only Jawaharlal Nehru has enjoyed three successive terms in government; Modi seems set to overhaul Nehru's long legacy. Soon, our Indian mirror will likely show Pakistanis an image of our own brutalised selves.

1. Democracy: Indian political life is not overdetermined by an all-powerful military. This is no small mercy. But seen on a broader canvas, the political mainstream in both India and Pakistan has been transformed by the combination of digitalised mass media and an extremely young population. In Pakistan the establishment cultivated traitor armies and is now suffering blowback. In India, Modi and the BJP have built an even bigger captive audience that is unremittingly rechristening India as a majoritarian polity.

More generally, the Modi regime has ruthlessly clamped down on

independent media and political dissidents. In the lead-up to elections, it has incarcerated competitors like Arvind Kejriwal of the Aam Aadmi Party whilst also defanging an already emaciated Congress. All of this is happening to the loud acclaim of a large and expanding social base.

Secularism: Indian secularism has a long but flawed history. The father of the Indian constitution and iconic Dalit leader Dr Ambedkar warned that if all Indians were equal on paper, actually existing Indian society was deeply hierarchical. For decades, a wide cross-section of social and political forces defended and fought for secular principles in spite of societal resistance. Today, the Hindu right has been mainstreamed to a degree that was unimaginable even when the Babri Masjid demolition took place.

While organisations such as the RSS were created in the 1920s, they remained sleeping giants until the turn of the century. In Modi's India, the Hindu right has fully ingrained itself in society through welfare groups, religious mobilisation and ideological campaigns. Its vigilante role is like the religious right in Pakistan, but one step ahead: it also wins elections.

Economy and environment: Since the end of the Cold War, India has enjoyed exalted status as a major success story of neoliberal globalisation. It has been lionised as the world's software and pharmaceutical outsourcing hub, has produced glittering spectacles like the IPL, boasts the world's biggest film industry and has been described as home to a huge middle class. While India is not overburdened by a military-run corporate empire and its economy has a stronger productive base, the

myth of prosperity now rings hollow. Tens of millions fell into poverty during and after the pandemic and inequality has reached earth-shattering proportions: the richest one per cent of Indians today have a bigger share of income than the same ruling class did under British rule.

Meanwhile, big industrial conglomerates like the Ambanis and Tatas pillage India's peripheries along with multinational capital for minerals and other natural resources. Indigenous populations and nature in Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar are expropriated in ways similar to the Baloch and other peripheries here.

Foreign policy: India once championed the Palestinian cause. Today, it is aligned with the murderous Zionist regime, and clamours to be the right-hand of US imperialism. It certainly enjoys autonomy in trade relations with powers like Russia but Modi's India puts to shame the once proud legacy of a country that led the Non-Aligned Movement. In the realm of Indo-Pak ties, Modi has mirrored the reactionary forces that demote the 'other' to appease hawkish galleries.

Pakistan and India are both home to very young populations, ecological crises and toxic politics. They are not the same, but their disturbingly similar trajectories will only change if enough of us on both sides coalesce around progressive alternatives that speak the language of a wider South Asian post-capitalist peace. Popular, democratic impulses in both countries' peripheries give us hope. But the time to build a critical mass of support in the mainstream is running out. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Finance minister calls for fiscal discipline by reducing operational expenditure

KARACHI (APP): Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Friday, called for maintaining fiscal discipline through reduced operational expenditures and also advocated for a public-private partnership model to foster national development.

He expressed the views in a significant meeting held here at the State Bank of Pakistan to deliberate on pivotal economic strategies and reforms. Governor SBP Jameel Ahmed, Chairman Pakistan Banks' Association Zafar Masud, and high-ranking officials from various Pakistani banks attended the meeting.

The meeting was a profound step towards aligning financial institu-

tions with Pakistan's broader economic goals, underlining the need for strategic collaboration and robust implementation of reform initiatives, said a statement received here.

The minister opened the discussion highlighting the robust start to the year, with a notable 5% growth in agriculture, spearheaded by a bumper rice crop. Aurangzeb acknowledged the visible signs of macroeconomic stability depicted by a narrowing current account deficit and exchange rate stability.

Underscoring the objectives of sustaining the stability and its transition into a permanent state, the finance minister emphasized the synergy between the industrial sector and energy

resources, alongside ongoing dialogues with the Ministry of Energy.

He lauded the caretaker government for maintaining fiscal discipline and re-framed the "IMF program as Pakistan program" aimed at reinforcing Pakistan's economic foundation. He also called for proactive implementation and ownership of the reform agenda.

The Minister stressed the importance of broadening the tax net to include under-taxed and untaxed sectors, particularly service providers, and addressed the critical issue of energy theft, advocating for streamlined governance and eventual privatization of power distribution companies.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov calls on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

KP revenue minister chairs meeting on land records computerization

Independent Report ABBOTTABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Revenue and Estate, Nazir Ahmad Abbasi chaired a meeting on Friday to discuss the computerization of land records. During the session, Minister Abbasi issued directives for the establishment of a dedicated counter at Abbottabad's Service Delivery Center (SDC), covering Lora, Bakot, and Boni patwar circles.

The initiative, aimed at issuing computerized deeds to curb corruption was highlighted during the meeting. Project Director Khalid Zaman provided an extensive overview of the project to the attendees. Nazir Abbasi also directed the implementation of similar initiatives in other service delivery centers province-wide. He also addressed the staff shortage issue in Service Delivery Centers.

Türkiye's foreign trade gap halves in January-February

ISTANBUL (AA/APP): Türkiye's foreign trade deficit decreased by 51% to \$12.95 billion during the January-February period, on a yearly basis, official figures showed on Friday.

The Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) announced that the country's exports totaled \$41 billion, up by 8.5%, and imports dropped by 16% to \$54 billion over the same period.

The foreign trade deficit was \$6.77 billion in February alone, narrowing by 44.2% year-on-year. Türkiye's exports went up by 13.6% to \$21 billion, while imports fell by 9.2% to \$27.85 billion in February versus the same month last year.

The exports - excluding energy products and non-monetary gold - were \$19.6 billion, up 12.3%, and imports



GILGIT: Chairman Committee on Telecommunication Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Amjad Hussain Advocate chairs a meeting regarding the telecommunication and internet issue in GB.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to enhance cooperation in IT and Telecom sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima, and Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, held discussions on Friday regarding inter-related matters of mutual interest and collaboration in the IT and Telecommunication sector.

The Ambassador of Azerbaijan congratulated Minister of State for IT, Shaza Fatima, for assuming her office, said a news release. Both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in the IT and telecom sector. Shaza Fatima high-

lighted the brotherly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, emphasizing Pakistan's high regard for its ties with Azerbaijan. She expressed Pakistan's desire to establish substantial relations between the two countries in the field of IT and Telecom.

Minister of State for IT, Shaza Fatima, articulated Pakistan's aspiration to initiate a youth exchange program with Azerbaijan.

She emphasized that the exchange of start-ups between the two countries would enhance relations.

Minister Shafay attends solar product launch

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain visited Raya Golf and Country Club Defence on Friday and attended the launching ceremony of a new solar product by the Chinese company Huawei as a special guest.

Alongside officials from the Chinese company, the provincial minister jointly launched the new solar product.

The minister highlighted that Pakistan faces

the challenge of environmental pollution and emphasized the strong friendly and economic relations between Pakistan and China, suggesting that both countries can progress together in green energy initiatives.

Chaudhry Shafay Hussain emphasized that the future of Pakistan is intertwined with the promotion of solar technology. He mentioned ongoing discussions with foreign companies regarding solar panel production in Punjab.

PSX loses 137 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Friday, losing 137.02 points, a negative change of 0.20 percent, closing at 67,005.11 points against 67,142.12 points the previous trading day.

A total of 313,035,305 shares valuing Rs.9,899 billion were traded during the day as compared to 421,118,268 shares valuing Rs.16,159 billion the last day. Some 343 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 136 of them recorded gains and 188 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 19 remained unchanged.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, X-Press Mekong, Taxidiara, Kerala, SkyRunner and Al-Bidda and scheduled to load/offload Container, Cement, Furnace oil, Palm oil and LNG berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Elengy Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on report period. A total of eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Chemroad Rose and Belforest left the Port on today morning while three more ships, Sky Runner.

Uzbekistan's Envoy, Minister forge path for enhanced economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Aybek Arif Usmanov and Pakistan's Commerce minister Jam Kamal Khan on Friday forged path for enhanced economic and trade relations.

Uzbekistan's Ambassador, Aybek Arif Usmanov, met with Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, aiming to elevate economic relations between the two nations, said a press release issued here.

Usmanov praised Minister Jam's experience

in politics and expressed confidence in his ability to enhance bilateral trade.

Stressing the longstanding friendly ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, Usmanov emphasized the necessity of bolstering economic cooperation across various sectors through Business to Business and Government to Government agreements.

Uzbekistan's foreign minister and deputy trade secretary have planned to visit Pakistan soon for B2B and G2G discussions aimed at boosting trade, he added.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb kicks start business activity at the Pakistan Stock Exchange Gong Ceremony in Karachi as the Chief Guest, ringing the bell to symbolize the commencement of trading.

Neelum Jhelum achieves max capacity of 969 MW after TRT inspection

ISLAMABAD (APP): Neelum Jhelum Hydroelectric Project has achieved its maximum generation capacity of 969 MW yesterday.

Following resumption of its operation earlier this month after inspection of the tail race tunnel (TRT), the project is continuously in operation as per the availability of water and contributing electricity to the National Grid, especially during Shahr and Ifar of the holy month of Ramadan, said a press release issued on Friday. Taking advantage of the low-flow season, operation of Neelum Jhelum Hydroelectric Project was stopped on January 10 for inspection of the rehabilitated tail race tunnel.

Subsequently, the detailed inspection was successfully carried out prior to resumption of generation from the project early this month. Most importantly, International Panel of Experts also inspected the tail race tunnel. Neelum Jhelum is a unique hydropower project with 90% being underground under high mountains over burden. The project, completed in 2018 on River Neelum in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, comprises of a Dam at Nauseri, an underground waterway system consisting of 52-Km long tunnels and an underground powerhouse at Chattar Kalas with four power generating units of 242.25 MW each.

Provincial Cabinet approves 1.15 billion Eid package for martyrs and poor families

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet constituted a committee to look into the grievances of the officers of the attached departments and the directives of the Peshawar High Court concerning reducing disparities in the salaries of the officers of attached departments and other cadres. The cabinet committee comprised of Advisor to Chief Ministers on Finance, Minister/Secretaries P&D, Establishment, and Population Welfare. The High Court had on a writ petition filed by over 973 officers of different attached departments directed the government to redress the grievances of the petitioners concerning granting them allowances allowed to officers of other cadres @ 1.5 of the basic pay in light of article 38(e) of the Constitution and the Principle of policy as provided in Article 29(2) and to remove disparity/discrimination among the civil servants.

The Finance Department has opposed the demand on the grounds of resource crunch and financial crises of the province. Its financial implications have been estimated to be over Rs.971/- million per year. The Provincial cabinet which met Wednesday evening under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Mr. Ali Amin Khan Gandapur was actively participated by Chief Secretary, Ministers, advisers and administrative secretaries. It took several decisions about the affairs of the province. The cabinet approved the release of Rs.1.15 billion funds as Eid Package for distribution among the 115000 poor individuals of the province at the rate of Rs.10,000/- per head/family. The package will also include the families of police martyrs to whom the Police Department, already having their details, will directly disburse these amounts.

The cabinet approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right of Digital Way Policy providing a frame work to facilitate the deployment of fiber connectivity through prompt resolution of public and private right-of-way issues commonly faced by telecom operators thereby leading to an increase in fiber connectivity. With this, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa becomes the first province to have a Right of Digital Way policy as aligned with the Federal Public and Private Right of (digital) Way Policy Directive 2021.



PESHAWAR: Former Presidents Haripur Chamber Safdar Zaman Shah, Haji Manzoor, Malik Muhammad Nazeer and others meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor House.

Women empowerment nucleus of US Mission efforts: Kristin Hawkins

LAHORE (APP): US Consul General to Lahore Kristin Hawkins has said that women empowerment has been the nucleus of their efforts at the Consulate and women participation is encouraged through exchange programs, educational scholarships and internship programs.

Hawkins said the month of March, besides observing International Women's Day on March 8, was commemorated throughout the United States and other countries to celebrate the strengths, resilience and accomplishments of women across all sectors ranging from business, academia, sports and others.

Minister holds meeting with ACASUS to discuss collaboration in KP

PESHAWAR (6 AM Report): Under the leadership of Health Minister Qasim Ali Shah, a meeting was convened titled "Reaching the Unreached" under the auspices of the EPI (Expanded Program on Immunization) and PEI (Polio Eradication Initiative). The briefing, organised by ACASUS, focused on collaboration efforts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Attending the meeting were Special Secretary Health for Polio Eradication Abdul Basit, Director General Health Services Dr. Shaukat Ali,

Deputy Director Provincial Emergency Operations Center Zeeshan, along with personnel from all district Emergency Operation Centres participating online. Minister Qasim Shah highlighted the significant responsibility that falls on parents of unvaccinated children, a consequence of insufficient awareness, which poses a risk to the entire nation. It is imperative to avoid international sanctions due to such negligence. The Federal Government will be engaged in discussions regarding these issues,

HCCI delegation calls on KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Haripur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) led by Safdar Zaman Shah called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here on Friday.

The delegation informed the Governor about the problems and issues faced by the business community of Haripur. The delegation also urged the Governor to play a role in facilitating businessmen and resolve their problems.

Speaking on the occasion, Haji Ghulam Ali highlighted the significance of businessmen and traders for strengthening the country's economy and assured cooperation with them.

CM takes notice of rape of mentally ill girl

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif took notice of the alleged rape of a 9-year-old mentally-challenged girl in DHQ Hospital Layyah.

She directed authorities concerned to identify the accused after a thorough investigation into the incident, and sought a report in this regard from IG Police. Madam Chief Minister said, "All those involved in the heinous crime should be punished severely."

Sub-cabinet committee reviews law, order in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): On the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the second meeting of the Sub-Cabinet Committee on Law and Orders was held in the Home Department under the chairmanship of Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique. Provincial Minister for Industry Shafay Hussain, Provincial Minister for Transport Bilal Akbar Khan, Finance Minister Mian Mujtaba Shuja ul Rehman and Provincial Minister for Agriculture Syed Muhammad Ashiq Hussain Shah participated as committee members. In the meeting, Home Secretary Noor Ul Amin Mengal,

Special Secretary Fazal ur Rehman, Additional Secretary Internal Security, Additional IG CTD Wassem Ahmed Khan, DG PP&S Muhammad Shahid Iqbal and other officers attended. In the meeting, Home Secretary Nurul Amin Mengal also gave a briefing on law and order.

Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique said that security has been beefed up throughout the province after the brutal attack on Chinese nationals in Bisham. In the meeting, cases of 53 prisoners were taken into consideration. Since June 20, 2022, 39 prisoners have been released on parole.

Protest against growing lawlessness in Shikarpur

Independent Report
SHIKARPUR: On the call of Jeay Sindh Mahaz-JSM Shikarpur chapter took out a Rally in protest against the growing lawlessness and safe recovery of Minor boy Mehrban Bhatti of 08, Priya Kumari of Sangrar Sukkur and other kidnapped persons at earliest.

According to reports reached here that the large number of Jeay Sindh Mahaz-JSM, parents of abducted child and citizens took out a protest Rally from Jumani Hall to Lakh-Gate Clock Tower Chowk here on Friday in protest against Lawlessness which caused record increase in heinous offences including Murders, kidnapping for ransom, dacoities, road robberies, street crimes etc in District Shikarpur which picture of Wana Waziristan.

The protest Rally was led by Assadullah Soomro and Imran Mangi. Speaking on the occasion, the angry protesters allegedly said that Shikarpur became a hub of Kidnappers, Dacoits, smugglers, outlaws which caused no one feels secure themselves here in Shikarpur specially the trade and businessmen, students are feeling the sense of insecurity where

daily heinous offences of kidnapping, murders, dacoities occurs without any fear of Law enforcement Agencies and our Police.

Among others, Ali Asghar Pahore, Abdul Sami Bhatti, Hameer Chandio, Meer Hakra, Wajid Shaikh, Hakeem Muhabbat Ali, Fahad Shahzad, Ahsan Rind, Soofi Liaqat Ali, Abdul Jabbar Shaikh, Abdul Khaliq Bhatti the father of abducted child, Khairal Soomro, Deshi Talib, Gulab Jaffery, Rahib Bhatti, civil society representatives and citizens have participated in protest Rally.

They have threatened to drive a serious protest movement that they would block the bypass road if the kidnapped minor boy Mehrban Bhatti of 08 and others would not released safely from the clutches of Kidnappers within a week.

It may be recalled that the Minor boy Mehrban Bhatti of 08 was kidnapped from Kidnappers city Alif Shah Shaheed area in the jurisdiction of Lakh-Gate Police Station some seven days ago and their parents received a ransom call of 5 million.



HYDERABAD: A large number of people offering Namaz-e-Jumma at Jamia Masjid city during Holy Fasting Month of Ramzan ul Mubarak

Minister pledges completion of PMDFC schemes by 2025

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Local Government and Community Development (LG&CD) department Zeeshan Rafique has pledged that all ongoing World Bank-funded schemes under Punjab Municipal Development Fund Company (PMDFC) will be completed by March 2025. PMDFC is working on municipal services projects in 16 cities including Daska,

Hafizabad, Jhelum, Kamonke, Muridke, Wazirabad, Gojra, Jaranwala, Jhang, Kamalia, Okara, Bahawalpur, Borewala, Khanewal, Kot Addu and Wahari in a transparent manner, which will significantly improve the quality of life there. He was speaking in a briefing by Managing Director Syed Zahid Aziz during a visit to the PMDFC office, here on Friday.

Policeman gunned down in Tank

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): A policeman was shot dead by unknown miscreants here on Wana road in the limits of Shaheed Mureed Akbar police station on Friday morning.

According to a police spokesman, a police head constable-Akbar Ali was going to his duty at Chowki Latif situated near Garah Baloch when unknown miscreants sprayed him with bullets near Sheikh Market. Latif was deputed at the chowki as Incharge.

A heavy police contingent reached the site and cordoned off the area. A search operation has been launched in the area to track down the suspects. The funeral of the martyred policeman would be offered at District Police Office at 11:30 a.m. today.

International News

ICJ tells Israel to 'ensure urgent assistance' in Gaza

Monitoring Desk
THE HAGUE: The world's top court ordered Israel to "ensure urgent humanitarian assistance" in Gaza without delay, saying "famine has set in". The International Court of Justice's latest order comes as heavy street battles continued to rage in besieged Gaza — and a major medical charity said it "hasn't seen any change" since a United Nations Security Council resolution this week demanding an immediate ceasefire.

At the ICJ, South Africa has charged that Israel is perpetrating a genocide in Gaza, an accusation strongly denied by Israel. Pretoria dragged Israel before the court, saying it was in breach of its obligations under the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, and urging the court to order a ceasefire. In a ruling in mid-January that made headlines worldwide, the ICJ ordered Israel to do everything it could to prevent genocide during its Gaza offensive. The court also ruled that Israel must allow aid into Gaza to ease the desperate humanitarian situation there.

South Africa followed up with a request for fresh measures a few weeks later, citing an announced incursion into the city of Rafah, but the court declined to impose additional measures. Undeterred, Pretoria tried again — this time urging the court to impose emergency measures to "save the Palestinian people in Gaza already dying of starvation". The ICJ's judges said that the mid-January rulings "do not fully address the consequences arising from the changes in the situation... thus justifying the modification of these measures". Pretoria hailed the latest ICJ decision, calling it "significant".

"Israel shall... take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay... the unhindered provision... of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance" in Gaza, the ICJ said. "Palestinians in Gaza are no longer facing only a risk of famine, but... famine is setting in," the Hague-based court said.

"The fact that Palestinian deaths are not solely caused by bombardment and ground attacks, but also by disease and starvation, indicates a need to protect the group's right to exist," it said in a statement. The MSF medical charity said there was no change on the ground since the Security Council resolution.

Indian foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said in a post on the social media platform X that he and Dmytro Kuleba discussed "the ongoing conflict and its wider ramifications," and said the two would work together to boost relations between their countries.



LONDON: Demonstrators protest outside the Department for Business and Trade in support of Palestinians.

UN expert defiant amid threats after Israel 'genocide' finding

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: A UN expert who determined that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza on Wednesday said that she had faced threats over her work but insisted it only made her more determined to push ahead. Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on the rights situation in the Palestinian territories,

said this week there were reasonable grounds to believe Israel was committing "genocide" against Palestinians in Gaza. Israel, which has long been highly critical of Albanese and her mandate, denounced her report as an "obscene inversion of reality", while pro-Israeli groups have called for her to step down.

Ukraine, India hold talks to strengthen ties

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: India's foreign minister held talks Friday with his Ukrainian counterpart, who was visiting to strengthen bilateral ties and cooperation with New Delhi, which considers Russia a historic ally from the Cold War-era.

Indian foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said in a post on the social media platform X that he and Dmytro Kuleba discussed "the ongoing conflict and its wider ramifications," and said the two would work together to boost relations between their countries.

"India and Ukraine have been traditional friends, but I think there is much more that we can do and should do, not only in the interests of our nations, but also in the interest of global development and security architecture," Kuleba said Friday. "We will be looking forward to restoring what had existed before the large scale invasion of Russia in Ukraine began."



A mourner carries the body of a Palestinian child killed in an Israeli strike, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

South Africa bus crash kills 45 Easter pilgrims from Botswana

Monitoring Desk
MAMATLAKALA: A bus crash in northern South Africa killed 45 pilgrims travelling from Botswana for Easter festivities on Thursday, authorities said, with the sole survivor an eight-year-old girl currently being treated in hospital. South African police said 31 female and 15 male Botswanan passengers died in the crash, after the driver lost control and collided with barriers on a bridge near Mamatlakala. The bus went over the bridge and hit the ground,

catching fire. Reuters TV footage from the scene showed a wreck of mangled metal from the bus amid scattered clothes and other belongings. "Authorities are still combing the scene for more bodies," the police said in a statement. All the victims were from the village of Molepolole near the Botswana capital Gaborone, it said. Some bodies were burned beyond recognition while others were trapped inside the debris or strewn about the scene.

US provides Maryland \$60m to start rebuild of collapsed Baltimore bridge

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The United States government awarded the state of Maryland an initial \$60 million in emergency funds on Friday to clear debris and begin rebuilding the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, an extraordinarily fast disbursement after such a disaster. The bridge came tumbling down early on Tuesday after a massive cargo freighter that had lost power ploughed into the structure in Baltimore Harbour. Two bodies have been recovered and four others are missing and presumed dead, believed to be trapped in a vehicle beneath concrete and steel that fell into the water. Maryland Governor Wes Moore had requested the \$60m earlier on Friday, and within hours the US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration approved the request to fund emergency work.

A tropical cyclone makes landfall in northern Madagascar, killing 18 people

Monitoring Desk
ANTANANARIVO: A tropical cyclone that swept across Madagascar has killed 18 people and left four missing after making landfall on the north of the Indian Ocean island nation earlier this week, authorities said on Friday. The storm has also caused severe flooding that partly submerged entire villages, displaced or affected some 47,000 people and set off landslides that injured three people, the National Office for Disaster Management said.

Poland, Ukraine close to agreement on food imports

Monitoring Desk
WARSAW: Poland and Ukraine are closer to reaching an agreement regarding agricultural imports, the Polish prime minister said on Thursday after intergovernmental talks, as Warsaw seeks to defuse farmers' protests. "We are close to a solution," Donald Tusk told a news conference. "This applies to the amount of products that can flow into Poland, once we determine it, we are close to ensuring that transit does not disturb the Polish market."

Israel kills dozens in airstrikes across Gaza Strip

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Israel sustained its aerial and ground bombardment of the Gaza Strip on Friday, killing dozens of Palestinians, as fighting raged around Gaza City's main Al Shifa hospital, Palestinian officials and the Israeli military said.

operations in around Gaza City's Al Shifa complex "while mitigating harm to civilians, patients, medical teams, and medical equipment", adding that over the past day it killed a number of gunmen and located weapons and military infrastructure.

Palestinian health officials said two Israeli strikes on the Al-Shejaia suburb in eastern Gaza City killed 17 people, while an Israeli air strike on a house in the Al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip killed eight people.

Al Shifa, the Gaza Strip's biggest hospital before the war, had been one of the few healthcare facilities even partially operational in north Gaza before the latest fighting. It had also been housing displaced civilians.

Gaza's Hamas-run government media office said at least 10 policemen, tasked with securing aid to the displaced in northern Gaza, were among those killed in Al-Shejaia.

The Israeli military said its forces continued said its forces conducted raids in central and southern areas including Khan Younis and Al-Karara, where troops exchanged fire with Palestinian gunmen before they killed them and located weapons and rockets.

North Korea rules out any meetings with Japan

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: North Korea has no interest in dialogue with Japan, state media KCNA reported on Friday, citing foreign minister Choe Son Hui. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said he wants to hold talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "without any preconditions" and is personally overseeing efforts to realise the first such leaders' summit in 20 years in an attempt to defuse decades of tensions.

But North Korea has said, it had no interest in a summit with Japan and would reject any talks, signalling no thaw in relations between the two countries. Choe also said Pyongyang has no intention to help with the issue of Japanese abductees, according to KCNA, adding North Korea will "respond sharply" to Japan's interference with its sovereignty.

However, Tokyo believes 17 Japanese were abducted, and continues to investigate the fate of those who did not return, according to Japanese media. North Korea's ambassador to China, Ri Ryong Nam, also said there would be no meeting at any level with Japan, a separate KCNA report said.

Ri remarked in a statement, adding that an official at the Japanese embassy in Beijing proposed a contact via email to a councilor of the North Korean embassy.

President for promoting barter trade, economic ties with Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday underlined the need for promoting barter trade and economic relations with Iran for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries.

The president, talking to Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Moghadam, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said that both countries had great scope for expanding bilateral economic cooperation in diverse fields.

Talking to the ambassador, the president expressed his commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

He called for working together to overcome the common challenges faced by both sides.

The Iranian ambassador congratulated the president on assuming the office.

He said that both Iran and Pakistan enjoyed his-

torical, religious and cultural ties, which were becoming stronger with time.

He emphasised the need for increasing the bilateral trade volume, banking cooperation, and air and business linkages between the two countries.

The ambassador said that Pakistan could benefit from the Chahbahar-Zahedan railroad for trade with Central Asia, Europe and Turkiye.

He expressed the hope that Pak-Iran relations would receive fresh impetus under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari.

He also conveyed warm regards from the Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, for the President Zardari.

Later, Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Ahmed Jawad Rabeil, also called on President Asif Ali Zardari and congratulated him on assuming the office.

The ambassador high-

lighted the atrocities and the reign of terror unleashed by the Israeli forces against innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Talking to the Palestinian ambassador, the President said that it was very painful to see the tragic sufferings of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli forces.

He stated that Pakistan had historic ties with Palestine, and would continue to stand by its Palestinian brothers and raise its voice at all fora.

He lauded the bravery and resilience of the Palestinian people, who had been waging a long struggle against Israeli occupation.

President Zardari urged the international community to make efforts for the free flow of humanitarian assistance to Gaza by lifting all the barriers and ensuring the protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam calls on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Working on strategy to carry out structural reforms, expand tax base: Finance Minister

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Friday, said that government is working on a two pronged implementation strategy to carry out structural reforms for enhancing Tax to GDP ratio.

The minister, while addressing Gong ceremony at Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi and later talking to media persons said that in the first phase of the strategy short to medium term measures would be taken for "closing the gaps, stemming the leakages and the losses while the second one was introducing structural reforms in the medium to long term."

He said that finance ministry was working with

law ministry and FBR to remove leakage in tax revenue, execution of track and trace system and digitizing its operations to ensure transparency and operational efficiency for enhancing tax collections.

The minister informed that cases amounting to around Rs1.7 trillion were under litigation in tribunals and government wanted that such cases be decided in the first three months.

The law ministry and the attorney general for Pakistan were requested to play their role in the regard, he added. Terming end-to-end digitalization of tax system as necessary for bringing transparency and confidence building of the tax payers, the minister said

that bringing the under-taxed and non-taxed sectors into the fold and digitization will result into additional revenue generation.

Referring to FBR's digitalization, Aurangzeb said that the Request for Proposal (RFP) for a world class consultant having experience in emerging markets like Pakistan would be issued in the next month.

Highlighting improvement in economic sector the minister said that economic indicators has turned positive as Gross Domestic Product was showing recovery mainly due to 5% growth in agriculture sector, stock market returned to profitability while headline inflation is gradually declining.

Pakistan has always valued its cordial relations with Turkiye: Kamran Tessori

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori said on Friday that Pakistan has always valued its cordial relations with Turkiye.

Tessori attended the Iftar diner hosted for dinner for orphans and special children at the Turkish consulate. Turkish Consul General Jamal welcomed Tessori on his arrival.

Expressing his thoughts, Tessori said: "Today I felt immense happiness by spending time with orphans and special children."

"I would like to extend an invitation to all the children present here to attend the Iftar diner at Governor House," Tessori said. "The ties between Pakistan and Turkey are based on bilateral trust, common values, and religious similarities."

"The exchange of trade and cultural delegations will help bring the two brotherly countries closer," he added.

Few days back, Tessori vowed to uplift the IT sector in the province.

Expressing his thoughts in Karachi, Tessori said: "Sindh will make its name in the field of IT. The standard of the IT classes across Sindh will be of high quality."

"About 2.5 million children will get benefit from the online short courses. We are also going to roll out the IT short courses in the different districts of Sindh," Tessori stated. "The process of the establishment of the IT university at Governor House is underway," he said.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi offering Dua at the Martyrs Monument during his visit to Frontier Constabulary Headquarters.

PM Shehbaz vows zero tolerance against smuggling, corruption

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the government will not allow any political or bureaucratic interference in its move to curb smuggling, corruption, power theft and tax evasion in the country.

"No political and bureaucratic influence will be allowed to interfere in this major surgery which we have to undertake collectively for the good of Pakistan and its 250 million people," the prime minister said while chairing a meeting on anti-smuggling.

He said it was very important to understand the real challenges of the country and then immediately fix them to revive and stabilize the economy.

For this, he said all stakeholders including the provinces, institutions, and armed forces will have to collaborate with the federal government to tackle one of the most important challenges of revival of economy.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said illegal trade and smuggling were the biggest challenges that had badly dented the country's economy. He recalled that in 2022, the coalition government allowed export of 250,000 tons of sugar, but it had to withdraw its decision "because we were told that the surplus target was not up to that level". However, he said the same amount of sugar was later exported to Afghanistan.

Wheat procurement begins in district Sanghar, no role of middlemen: DC

HYDERABAD (APP): The Deputy Commissioner Sanghar Dr. Imran-ul-Hassan Khawaja has announced the commencement of wheat procurement in the district, stating that he will personally oversee the process and the distribution of "bardana" will start after verification by revenue officers.

According to a hand-out issued on Friday, the Deputy Commissioner Sanghar informed that 0.7m bags of wheat will be procured in the district, alongside a substantial quantity of wheat and bardana of the previous season is also available in warehouses. Dr. Khawaja further elaborated that due to favorable weather conditions and adequate water availability for irrigation, wheat cultivation has been carried out on 0.5m hectares in the district, resulting in a bumper crop.

Deputy Commissioner chaired a meeting with officials of food and revenue departments yesterday, issuing directives that the distribution of bardana will take place after verification by revenue officers, and thirty percent of wheat procurement will be sourced directly from farmers, with no role for middlemen.

District Food Controller (DFC) Vishnu Das informed the meeting that currently 12,000 bags of wheat are available in government warehouses in the district, along with last year's bardana stock. He said 37 procurement centers have been established, while 0.7m bags of wheat will be procured.



HYDERABAD: A large number of people offering Namaz-e-Juma (Friday Prayer) at Homestead Hall Road during the holy month of Ramadan.

Balochistan Food Authority signs MoU with ICCBS-Karachi University

KARACHI (APP): The Balochistan Food Authority (BFA), Government of Balochistan has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Industrial Analytical Center (IAC), International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi.

The purpose of this MoU is to create a long-term framework of collaboration, cooperation, and development of a strong linkage between BFA and IAC-ICCBS, for testing of food products, which is in the interest of both institutions. The BFA Director Technical Dr. Noor Hassan and Prof. Dr. Farzana Shaheen, the Director of the ICCBS, University of Karachi, signed the MoU in an online meeting held at the HEJ, Research Institute of Chemistry, University of Karachi on Friday.

Among others who attended the meeting were officials from ICCBS, including Prof. Dr. Shabana Simjee, Prof. Dr. Syed Ghulam Musharraf, and Dr. Shakil Ahmed, and officials from BFA, including Dr. Abdul Wasay, Naqeeb Ullah, Syed Muhammad Tariq Shah, and Miss Bakhawar Yousaf.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb kickstarts business activity at the Pakistan Stock Exchange Gong Ceremony in Karachi as the Chief Guest, ringing the bell to symbolize the commencement of trading.

Pakistan's India diplomat Disputes resolution, enhanced understanding vital for regional peace, stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's charge d'affaires in India said that the goal of regional peace and stability could be achieved by enhancing mutual understanding, addressing shared concerns and resolving longstanding disputes including Jammu and Kashmir.

"A cycle of perpetual conflict and tensions, is not our ordained destiny. We can emerge from the shadow of the past and script a future of hope for our two peoples based on peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality and mutual respect", Saad Ahmad Warraich said addressing the Pakistan Day reception held at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, said a press release received on Friday.

He said that the founding fathers of Pakistan and India had envisioned amicable relations between the two countries. Unfortunately, the history of their bilateral relationship remained challenged for the most part, he added.

He said that the founding fathers of Pakistan and India had envisioned amicable relations between the two countries. Unfortunately, the history of their bilateral relationship remained challenged for the most part, he added.

The Indian diplomats did not even respond to the Iftar dinner invitation.

Pak expresses dismay over absence of Indian diplomats from Iftar dinner

ISLAMABAD (INP): - Pakistan expressed dismay over the absence of Indian diplomats from the Iftar dinner held for ambassadors at the Foreign Office (FO).

According to sources, despite the new government's desire for positive relations with India, the Indian High Commission displayed conduct contrary to diplomatic norms. An invitation to PM Shehbaz alongside ambassadors from other countries was given. Foreign minister Ishaq Dar hosted the dinner on March 27.

The Indian diplomats did not even respond to the Iftar dinner invitation.

DC visits utility stores

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Larkana Dr. Sharjeel Noor paid a surprise visit to the utility store established in Agani village of the district and inspected the available stock and its quality on Friday.

On the occasion, he directed the officials to provide daily commodities to the common people at the prices fixed by the government. In this regard, any kind of negligence will not be tolerated and strict action will be taken against hoarders. Shopkeepers were advised to display government-notified rates, action and transparency and fairness for all.

He further said that it is our responsibility to provide maximum relief to the common people and ensure the implementation of the prices fixed by the government so that they do not face any kind of inconvenience.

Dacoit lynched in Karachi after food-delivery man killed for resisting robbery

KARACHI (INP): A food delivery man, a father of two, was killed in cold blood by street criminals on Karachi's Jauhar Chowrangi Flyover on the night between Thursday and Friday. The robbers, however, were subsequently surrounded by a mob who lynched one of them while the other fled.

Police say the robbers also fired shot at a police party responding to the incident. Ali Rehbar, 38, was passing by Jauhar Chowrangi Flyover late Thursday night when robbers stopped him and shot him dead for showing resistance, according to police officials.

PTI demands resignations of CJP, IHC CJ amid letter controversy

ISLAMABAD (INP): The legal team of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Friday demanded the resignation of the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and the Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court Aamer Farooq, stating that the judges' letter has proven that the justice system has become paralytic.

The demand by the former ruling party comes amid a controversy whipped up by a letter penned by six IHC judges

to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC).

In the missive, the judges revealed the coercive tactics employed by intelligence agencies to influence judges—revelations that sent shockwaves across the legal and political landscape.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, PTI Spokesperson Raouf Hasan, along with other members of the party's legal team, emphasised the significance of the letter from six judges.



HYDERABAD: Residents of Khai road are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Hyderabad press club.

Rise of one billion dollars in IT exports expected this FY: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that an increase of one billion dollars in IT exports was expected this fiscal year.

In a statement issued here on Friday, he said that the volume of IT exports last year was 26 billion dollars, which was likely to increase by one billion dollars this year, but it was nothing compared to the neighboring country whose exports stand at 320 billion dollars.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that our annual IT exports could jump to 25 billion dollars with efforts in the right direction.

He said that the IT sector has a one percent share of Pakistan's GDP and provides employment to more than three hundred thousand people.

This important sector has seen some improvement from October 2023; a

fifteen percent increase has been recorded in the first eight months of this year, he added.

The business leader said that in addition to private companies and freelancers, the stability of the rupee and facilities from the central bank has also played an important role in the development of the IT sector.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan's IT industry was taking off, but a comprehensive road map was needed in this regard. Pakistani companies and freelancers were facing banking problems for which the central bank has taken commendable steps but there was still a lot to be done. He observed that it will be difficult to fully exploit this important sector's potential without providing an enabling environment.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan ranks second in the world in terms of the number of freelancers for whom, if proper education and training was arranged.



KARACHI: Gender Interactive Alliance (GIA) Leader, Shahzadi Roy addresses to media persons during press conference, at Karachi press club.

Rana appointed chairman PM's Youth Program

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has appointed Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan as Chairman PM's Youth Programme, a government's notification said Friday.

"The appointment of Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan shall be in honorary capacity," said the notification issued by the Cabinet Division.

The notification said the PM desired all relevant stakeholders to extend full cooperation to the Chairman Youth Programme in discharging his official business.

Excise team successfully thwarts smuggling attempt

KARACHI (APP): Excise Narcotics Control team apprehended notorious drug dealers Gul Rehman and Abdul Qadeer during an operation against drug peddlers near Fatima Jinnah Park on Malir Cantt Road.

According to a communication, ten and a half kilograms of hashish was recovered from the possession of the accused.

In Korangi, the Excise Narcotics Control team arrested notorious drug dealer Lal Marjan, son of Janan, during an operation on Feroze Azam Road. 25 kilograms of hashish, containing 50 packets, were recovered from the possession of the accused. Cases have been registered against the accused.

The Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon congratulated the Excise Narcotics Control Team for the successful operations against drugs. He emphasized that our youth should be mobilized against the menace of drugs by promoting awareness and active participation.

Eid special discount inaugurates handicrafts products

SUKKUR (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO), Muhammad Dital Kalhoru along with Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Asif Khuhro, Micro Finance head, Shazia Shaikh and General Management Ilyas Sheikh inaugurated Eid special discount counter which offer upto 65% off on all hand made products of Sartyoon Sang Crafts Center at the premises of the SRSO main complex here on Friday. Senior Managers of different department including Naveed Memon, Shahzaib Hussain Mahar, Sufi Riaz Jalalani Naimatullah Shaikh, Muhammad Akram Shaikh, Hafeeza Bozdar, Rashid Bhutti and others were also present on the occasion.

DC Larkana chairs meeting regarding Youm-e-Ali arrangements

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Commissioner of Larkana, Dr. Sharjeel Noor Channa, has instructed officers to enhance sanitary systems and preparations for the upcoming commemoration of the martyrdom anniversary of Amirul Momineen Hazrat Ali ibne Abi Talib (R.A.).

He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting regarding the arrangements for the martyr-

dom anniversary of Hazrat Ali (R.A) which is to be observed on the 21st of Ramadan.

The meeting was attended by ADC-I, ADC-II, Assistant Commissioner Larkana, Officers of District Police Larkana, officials of Shahbaz Rangers, the Ulema various schools of thought, Municipal Commissioner and officers of various departments.



HYDERABAD: Edhi volunteers distribute Eid gift to deserving family at Edhi center.

Sindh Govt approves over Rs. 1.3 billion for jail repairs and improvements

HYDERABAD (INP): The Sindh Home Department has allocated Rs. 1,300,149,000 (over Rs. 1.3 billion) for the repair and improvement of 15 jails across the province. This initiative aims to address infrastructure concerns and enhance overall jail conditions.

The Home Department prepared a case for approval by the Planning and Development Department (PDWP). The project encompasses construction and repair work across various jails, including:

- The allocated funds are designated for a variety

of construction and repair projects aimed at enhancing the infrastructure of these jails. Specifically, the plans include construction activities at Central Jail Sukkur, Central Jail Khairpur, Central Jail Larkana, and District Jail Ghotki. Additionally, repairs are slated for District Jail Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Women Jail Larkana, and Sukkur Jail.

Among the proposed upgrades are the construction of an administrative block within Central Jail Karachi and the improvement of internal roads, pathways.