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Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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ISLAMABAD: The newly elected members of the National Assembly taking oath of their office during the inaugural session of the 16th National Assembly at the Parliament House.

Newly elected MNAs take oath amid loud sloganeering

Election of PM to be held on March 3; Nomination papers of Ayaz Sadiq, Amir Dogar for NA Speaker accepted

ISLAMABAD (INP): The inaugural session of the newly elected National Assembly commenced with Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in the chair to induct a fresh batch of lawmakers, who started arriving in the Parliament House before the scheduled time. The newly elected MNAs were administered the oath by the speaker after which they all also signed on the registration rolls. Moreover, the election for the Lower House speaker and deputy speaker will be held today, March 1. After the oath, the speaker first asked the candidates for speaker and deputy speaker to sign on the roll of members, which included PML-N Ayaz Sadiq and Awais Leghari. As per the official agenda, the session commenced with a recitation of the naat, the holy Quran and the national anthem. Following the national anthem, the Sunni Ittehad Council's MNAs-elect gathered in front of the speaker's dais and created a commotion with a strong protest with slogans and chants. As a result, the PML-N members also responded with counter slogans of "Ghari chor (watch thief)" against the PTI and its leadership. The Sunni Ittehad Council members were carrying posters of Imran Khan, while several leaders, including Barrister Gohar, were clad in masks depicting the former prime minister. On consistent sloganeering by PTI members, the speaker warned they would be evicted from the House. The National Assembly Secretariat has also issued the procedure for polling for the speaker and deputy speaker, which is set to take place on March 1. In order to avoid any

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Routine life paralysed in port city, adjoining areas:

Gwadar declared calamity-hit due to critical situation of torrential rains

Caretaker CM says extraordinary situation emerged because of continuous rains in Gwadar, directs to concerned authorities to mobilize all available resources in difficult time

Independent Report QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial government has declared Gwadar as calamity-hit district. This was announced by caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai here on Thursday. Jan Achakzai said that Gwadar has been declared calamity-hit owing to critical situation emerged following torrential rains for last few days. According to the Minister Information, the caretaker Chief Minister has already signed the summary regarding declaring the port city as calamity-hit. He informed that the caretaker Chief Minister

Mir Ali Mardan Domki has been personally monitoring the situation in the rain hit areas of the province including Gwadar. He said that the basic infrastructure has been damaged due to the rains in the district. However, rescue activities are being carried out by the Pak Army along with other concerned departments and local administration. He commended the role and spirit of personnel of Pak Army and other institutions in this regard. Meanwhile, the caretaker Chief Minister said that effective rescue activities are continued with assistance of Pak Army in

Gwadar. He mentioned that the extraordinary situation was emerged due to the continuous rains. He said that steps are being taken to mitigate the sufferings of affected people in emergent basis. He commended Pak Army for carrying out relief activities together with civil administration in critical time. The Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to mobilize all available resources in the critical time. Needless to mention here is that the routine life has been paralysed due to the continuous rains in Gwadar and adjoining areas.

Ghazala Gola becomes 1st female Deputy Speaker

Khaliq Achakzai sworn in as 17th Speaker Balochistan Assembly

PML-N and PPP's parliamentarians elected unopposed as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of BA respectively

Independent Report QUETTA: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nominated Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai and Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP)'s nominated Ms. Ghazala Gola were sworn in as Speaker and Deputy Speaker Balochistan Assembly respectively here on Thursday. The Secretary Balochistan Assembly, Tahir Shah Kakar announced that no other candidate submitted their nomination papers for the slots of Speaker and Deputy Speaker provincial



Chief of the Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir addressing the closing ceremony of the Seventh Pakistan Army Team Spirit Exercise-2024 at Kharian.

Balochistan CM's election on Saturday

QUETTA (APP): The election for the new Chief Minister of Balochistan will be held on Saturday (March 2). Chairing the session of Balochistan Assembly on Thursday, the newly elected Speaker Abdul Khaliq Achakzai announced the schedule for the election of the Leader of the House (Chief Minister).

He said that the candidates for the slot of chief minister could submit their nomination form till 5 p.m. on Friday, while the election would take place on Saturday. The session was adjourned to meet again on 11 a.m. on Saturday. Later talking to media persons, the Speaker said that he would run the House impartially and would treat both treasury and opposition benches equally. He would endeavour to ensure the rule of law and supremacy of the Constitution.

Achakzai urged the assembly members to rise above their political affiliations and work together for strengthening of democracy and welfare of the people. He thanked the MPAs for electing him as Speaker of the Balochistan Assembly.

Umar, Ali Khan vow to bring PTI founder as prime minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders Umar Ayub and Ali Muhammad Khan said on Thursday that the PTI founder will be in the assembly as prime minister. He was talking to media outside the National Assembly here before attending the session of the newly-elected house. He vowed that the PTI would resolve people's problems. Ayub said that the international financial institutions want proper use of the debt as the government does not have the ability to do so. He said that the members of the Sunni Unity Council (SUC) would attend the assembly session en masse, take oath and stage protest. The PTI founder has directed the members-elect to ensure their presence in the assembly session. Ali Muhammad Khan said that their leader would return to the highest office with a two-thirds majority. He said that the party had won 180 seats but deprived of its mandate by tampering with Form 47. "We have pointed this out to the IMF," he added.

Attends 7th Pak Army Team Spirit Exercise-2024 PATS, right forum fostering team spirit in evolving character of war

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Thursday said Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) was the right forum, which appropriately combined professional military skills and tactical acumen of all participating soldiers, fostering much-needed team spirit in the face of evolving character of war. The Army Chief was addressing the participants of the 7th Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024 as chief guest that concluded at Kharian Garrison with an impressive Closing Ceremony, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The COAS appreciated the participating teams for their professionalism, physical & mental endurance and high morale displayed during various stages of the exercise. He reiterated mutual learning during such exercises and said: "Pakistan Army upholds rich soldierly attributes of character, courage and competence which have amply been displayed by our men in the face of fight against terrorism." The 60 hours rigorous "Patrolling Exercise" aimed at enhancing combat skills through sharing of innovative ideas and experiences by the participants of the forum. Seven teams from Pakistan Army and fifteen teams from friendly countries including Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Türkiye participated in the exercise. Azerbaijan, China, Germany, Indonesia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Myanmar witnessed the exercise as observers.



ISLAMABAD: Newly elected Members of National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan and Barrister Gohar Khan arrives to attend 1st session of 16th National Assembly at Parliament House.

JUI-F to sit on opposition benches: Fazlur Rehman

Will not take part in PM, president, speaker elections, says JUI Chief ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced that his party will not participate in the upcoming elections for the Speaker, Prime Minister, and President of Pakistan. This decision signifies JUI's intention to function as an opposition party in the newly formed parliament. Speaking to the media in Islamabad on Thursday, Maulana Rehman stated that JUI will "not use the right to vote" and will instead "sit in the opposition." He further emphasized that JUI will not be involved in the selection of the Prime Minister, Speaker, and Deputy Speaker. When questioned about the future of their protest movement, Maulana Rehman remained ambiguous, stating, "wait, God willing, we will represent the people." He also revealed details of a meeting with representatives of other political parties, including the Muslim League-N, Pakistan Peoples Party, Balochistan Awami Party, and the Independent Parliamentary Group. While describing the discussions as positive and highlighting his party's sincerity, Maulana Rehman reiterated JUI's refusal to participate in a parliament that, in his view, does not represent the will of the people. JUI's decision to remain in opposition reflects its continued disagreement with the outcome of the recent elections and its intention to hold the current government accountable.

Writing letter to IMF is anti state act: Nawaz Sharif

Letter proof Imran wants country's destruction: Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD (Online): PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif has said writing letter to IMF is tantamount to commit anti state act. "Writing to letter to IMF is tantamount to indulge in anti state act. He said this in an informal talks with the media men on his arrival in parliament house to attend inaugural session of National Assembly (NA) here Thursday. Talking on matter of writing letter by PTI to IMF on polls rigging he said no political party can

write letter this way. Only they can write such letter. This is their routine norm. Writing this letter is anti state act. You can deduce result from this letter. Like wise Shehbaz Sharif nominated Prime Minister said while talking to media men after his arrival in NA that PTI has proved by writing letter to IMF after cipher that it wants to annihilate country. We condemn this act on the part of PTI. He held PTI wrote this

letter to sabotage IMF program. INP adds: PML-N President and prime minister in waiting, Shehbaz Sharif, has called the letter written by the PTI to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) another anti-national move of the party. "After the cipher, this letter is another proof of the PTI's anti-state interests," he remarked while arriving at the Parliament House for the inaugural National Assembly session on Thursday morning.



QUETTA: MPA Engineer Zamrak Khan Achakzai taking oath from Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) candidate Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai as Speaker Balochistan Assembly

Governor directs to expedite relief operation in rain-hit areas

Independent Report QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has expressed sorrow over the damages caused due to the devastating rains and storms in different areas of Makran including Gwadar, Jiwan and Turbat. The Governor said that the relief activities are continued by all concerned institutions, still there is a need to expedite these activities further and provide the affected people necessary relief by shifting them to the safer places. The Governor also sought the details of ongoing relief activities from the Provincial Disaster Management Authority. He said that he is in contact with the heads of the institutions regarding relief activities and rehabilitation of the affected people. The Governor acknowledged that the present interim government is taking steps for compensation of the losses and provision of relief. In this regard, the federal government has also extending cooperation to the government, he added.

NP decides to sit in opposition in BA, says Dr. Malik Baloch

Independent Report QUETTA: The President National Party and member of Balochistan Assembly, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch has decided that the party has decided to sit in opposition in the provincial assembly. Speaking to the media persons after his walk out from the assembly session on Thursday, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch said that the February 8, 2024's elections were the worst in history of the country and so of Balochistan. He said that the party's central committee discussed the situation following recent elections in detail. He said that after discussion, it was decided that party would sit on opposition benches. He also said that as a mark of protest we also boycotted the assembly session and election proceedings for the speaker and deputy speaker.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Muhammad Zubair Khan Jamali in a meeting with Caretaker Provincial Minister Mehmoodul Hassan

Heavy rainfall: Education deptt decides to close all schools till March 7

Independent Report QUETTA: The Education Department (Schools) Government of Balochistan has decided to close all schools till March 7, due to heavy rainfall through the province. According to an official notification issued here by the Education Department, all public and private schools across the province shall remain closed from February 29 to March 7, 2024. It was directed to all District Education Officers as well as Heads and Principals of all public and private schools to ensure compliance of the orders in this regard.

MQM rejects offer to join federal cabinet

ISLAMABAD (INP): MQM Pakistan rejected the offer to be part of the federal cabinet. MQM decided to give Prime Minister vote to PML-N candidate but refused to join the federal cabinet. PML-N had offered federal ministries to MQM at the centre. According to sources, the party wanted support on the constitutional amendment to give financial and administrative autonomy to the local bodies across the country.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, arriving before the start of the inaugural session of the National Assembly, at the parliament house building in the Federal Capital.

Demand Gwadar be declared calamity-hit district: Newly elected MPAs vow to work for betterment of country and province forgetting bitterness of elections

Independent Report QUETTA: The newly elected members of provincial assembly have vowed to work for betterment of the country and province besides resolving the issues of masses just forgetting the bitterness of elections. They also vowed to play role for bringing peace and development of Balochistan with sincerity. Some parliamentarians pleaded to declare Gwadar as calamity hit owing to the situation emerged due to torrential rains there. They were expressing their views while speaking at the assembly forum that met with newly elected speaker Abdul Khaliq Achakzai in the chair on

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ISSI hosts seminar on "Pakistan's Space Policy, Tapping into the space potential"

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on Thursday hosted a seminar entitled "Pakistan's Space Policy: Tapping into the Space Potential".

Maj. Gen. @ Amer Nadeem, former Chairman of Pakistan Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), delivered the keynote address. Eminent discussants from academia and think-tanks presented their perspectives.

The seminar provided valuable insights into Pakistan's National Space Policy (NSP) and its space potential to accelerate

socio-economic development. The key challenges, as well as options available for Pakistan, were discussed.

He stressed the necessity for strict prioritization of technologies that align with the country's immediate needs and capabilities. He expressed optimism about Pakistan's space program, citing the government's steadfast commitment and determination as key drivers of progress. He highlighted the need to emphasize the regulatory sector and the public-private partnerships.

He suggested that joining regional platforms will also help Pakistan develop its space program. He emphasized that with continued support and owner-

ship, Pakistan is poised to achieve significant milestones in space exploration. In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the salience of Pakistan's first-ever Space Policy, emphasizing that it provided a comprehensive framework for the future development of the space sector in line with emerging global trends and catering to Pakistan's crucial national needs. Noting the pivotal role of space technology in modern societies, he underscored the imperative for Pakistan to harness the space technology's potential for socio-economic development and security.



QUETTA: Speaker Balochistan Assembly Abdul Khaliq Achakzai presiding Balochistan Assembly Session.

Sarfraz Bugti takes oath as MPA Balochistan



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QUETTA: The newly elected Member of Provincial Assembly, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti took oath of his membership in the Balochistan Assembly here on Thursday.

The Presiding Officer, Engineer Zamarak Khan Achakzai administered oath to Mir Sarfraz Bugti. It may be mentioned here that Mir Sarfraz Bugti could not take oath of the membership due to sickness the other day.

Shehbaz Sharif's bureaucracy team back in PM Office

ISLAMABAD (INP): The process of redeployment of former Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's bureaucratic team in the Prime Minister's Office has started through appointment and transfer in the federal bureaucracy.

Before Shehbaz Sharif becomes the Prime Minister, an important appointment has been made in the Prime Minister's Office and Sameer Ahmed Syed has been transferred from the Punjab Government to Federal Government as Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.

Sameer Ahmad Syed was appointed as Principal Staff Officer of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Secretary to Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin

Naqvi, he will also perform the duties of Principal Staff Officer (PSO) to Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, Grade 22 Officer Pervez Ahmed Junejo and Grade 20 Officer Ayesha Zareen Siddique, awaiting appointment in Establishment Division, have been made Officer on Special Duty (OSD) Establishment Division. Additionally, OSD Muhammad Saleem Deputy Secretary Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis has been appointed while the services of Deputy Secretary Ministry of Religious Affairs Muhammad Razi National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Deputy Secretary Finance Division Military Finance Wing Kashif Rasheed have been returned to Auditor General Pakistan.

Newly elected MPAs vow to...

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sured their full support to the newly elected speaker, Abdul Khaliq Achakzai.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti expressed the hope that new speaker would run the assembly with total impartiality. He also pledged to run the House as a Jirga as per the province's traditions.

Mir Asadullah Baloch said that the issues of Balochistan are to be resolved by the House. He appreciated the services of former Speaker Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali and former deputy Speaker Sadar Babar Musakhail saying they run the House in an excellent manner.

Mir Zahoor Buledi hoped that the members of assembly would play their part to resolve issues of the province.

He asked those making criticism on elections to work hard instead of criticism. He said that the recent elections may not be made controversial. He said that our leaders have accepted results of the elections, therefore, others should also do so.

Farah Azeem Shah said that heavy responsibilities rest with our shoulders, so we have to make struggle for resolving public issues together.

Empowering EC to give date for election LHC summons advocate general, attorney general for assistance on petition

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has summoned Advocate General and Attorney General for assistance on petition filed against Election Commission (EC) powers for giving date for general election.

Justice Shahid Bilal took up for hearing the petition filed by Mian Shabbir Ismail Thursday.

Azhar Siddique advocate gave arguments on behalf of petitioner.

Federal government, EC and others have been made respondents in the petition.

The counsel for the petitioner took the plea that the powers for giving date for election rest with president or provincial governor as per constitution. By making amendment in section 57 of Election ACT powers for giving date for holding election were given to EC. The amendment in section 57 of election act runs contrary to the constitution.

The petitioner requested the court to nullify section 57 of election act.

The court while summoning advocate general and attorney general for assistance adjourned the hearing of the case till March 5.

Australian Cameron's century takes team to 279-9 in 1st test against New Zealand

WELLINGTON (INP): Century scored by Australian Cameron Green took his team to 279-9 against New Zealand on opening day of the first test here at Basin Reserve.

Earlier, four wickets of Australia fell for only 89 runs after which Cameron was put into bat with rescue mission who supported the team along with Mitchell Marsh, who scored 40.

Cameron Green 24, brought up three figures with his 16th four in the final over to end unbeaten on 103 with Josh Hazlewood yet to score.

"Obviously it feels really good, mainly with where we were as a team," Green said.

"It was a pretty tough wicket out there ... someone just needed to bat through so glad it was me. Was nice to stick it out, and hopefully put a semi-com-

US urges new Pak govt. to prioritize economy, continue engagements with IMF

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The United States supports Pakistan's efforts to "break free" from the vicious cycle of debt and financing, a State Department Spokesperson has said, urging the new government to continue working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other global financial institutions.

"Pakistan's new government must immediately prioritize the economic situation because the policies over the next several months will be crucial to maintaining economic stability for Pakistanis," Spokesperson Mathew Miller told his daily news briefing on Wednesday.

The spokesperson was responding to a question at

the daily State Department briefing about a letter sent by ex-PTI's Chairman Imran Khan's to the IMF, suggesting to link the next loan facility to an audit of the Feb 8 general elections in the country.

"I'll just say with respect to the IMF that we support Pakistan's efforts to break free from the vicious cycle of debt and international financing," the Spokesperson added.

"The long-term health of Pakistan's government - or economy is crucial to its stability," Miller added.

Pakistan has been facing financial challenges in recent years, with dwindling foreign exchange reserves and declining value of its national currency.

Australian Cameron's century takes team to 279-9 in 1st test against New Zealand

petitive total on the board."

Green, batting at number four, fought back after New Zealand seamer Matt Henry took the key wickets of Steve Smith, Usman Khawaja and Marsh to end with 4-43 on a green pitch.

Henry dismissed Smith for 31 before lunch, bowled Khawaja for 33 after the break then snaggled Marsh and Nathan Lyon, for five.

Scott Kugeleijn, restored to the side, also grabbed two wickets, removing out-of-form Marnus Labuschagne for one and Alex Carey for 10.

Black Caps rising star Will O'Rourke, who took nine wickets on his debut this month, bagged two more in the shape of Travis Head (1) and Mitchell Starc (9).

Green said the wicket would still offer plenty for the Australian quick bowlers on Friday.

Eating ultra processed food can make you prone to 32 diseases: Study

ISLAMABAD (APP): Regular consumption of ultra-processed foods may increase your risk of 32 diseases including cancer, heart and lung conditions, mental health disorders, and even early death, according to a large study.

Ultra-processed foods, including packaged baked goods and snacks, fizzy drinks, sugary cereals, and ready-to-eat or heat products, undergo multiple industrial processes and often contain colours, emulsifiers, flavours, and other additives. These products also tend to be high in added sugar, fat, and/or salt, but are low in vitamins and fibre.

An international team of researchers from Australia, the US, France and Ireland found convincing evidence that higher ultra-processed food intake was associated with around a 50 per cent increased risk of cardiovascular disease-related death, a 48-53 per cent higher risk of anxiety and common mental disorders, and a 12 per cent greater risk of type 2 diabetes, Medical Daily reported.

Fly Jinnah introduces daily non-stop flights connecting Lahore to Sharjah

ISLAMABAD (INP): Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, announces the launch of its latest international service, connecting Lahore city to Sharjah city in United Arab Emirates (UAE). This exciting addition to Fly Jinnah's expanding network marks a significant milestone in the airline's commitment to providing affordable and convenient travel options for passengers. The new service will connect both cities with daily non-stop flights starting from March 27, 2024.

The spokesperson of Fly Jinnah said, "We are delighted to introduce our newest addition to our expanding network, reaffirming Fly Jinnah's commitment to continually providing diverse travel options supported by affordability, reliability, and convenience. We are looking forward to welcoming our passengers aboard our new flights".

Following the recent launch of Islamabad - Sharjah route, Fly Jinnah is extending its reach in the UAE with a new service that will connect another Pakistani city with the third-largest city in the United Arab Emirates and a vibrant hub in the Gulf region, Sharjah. This strategic step will further strengthen the ties between the two nations, creating more opportunities for business and leisure travelers. Fly Jinnah remains steadfast in offering convenient and affordable service to its passengers. With its modern fleet of five Airbus A320 aircraft, the airline currently connects five major cities in Pakistan, namely Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta, in addition to the newly launched international destination to Sharjah in the UAE from both Islamabad and Lahore.

In addition to the extra comfort provided by the most generous seat-pitch of any economy cabin, the carrier offers affordable and value-driven travel experiences through "SkyCafe" onboard menu where passengers can enjoy a wide variety of delicacies between snacks, sandwiches, and meals at affordable prices. The aircraft is also equipped with "SkyTime", a free in-flight streaming service that allows passengers to stream a wide selection of entertainment directly to their devices.



QUETTA: CEO Kareem Baloch giving certificate among participants after tanning on sensitization and mobilization of media workshop on "citywide inclusive sanitation(CWIS)" organized by HOPE and FANSA.

Newly elected MNAs take oath...

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mismangement, the entry of political workers into parliament has been banned.

Arrivals

Among those arriving early were PML-N leader Khawaja Asif, Kheel Das Kohistani, and PTI-backed independent candidates Omar Ayub, Zartaj Gul and Sher Afzal Marwat. PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif, party leader Attaullah Tarar, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party President Aleem Khan along with party leaders Aun Chaudhry and Munazza Hassan have reached the assembly.

Moreover, PPP's Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Hina Rabbani Khar and sister Aseefa Bhutto, Naz Baloch, Sunni Ittehad Council's Ali Muhammad Khan, Zain Qureshi and Shehryar Afridi also reached the assembly, as well as PML-N's Tariq Fazal Chaudhry and Hanif Abbasi. JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and MQM leader Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Farooq Sattar are also in attendance.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, MPA Marriyum Aurangzeb and Senator Ishaq Dar are also in Parliament House to attend the assembly session.

Speaking to the media, Ayub confirmed that the PTI-backed independent winners would be taking oaths as MNAs and also raise their voices against the alleged electoral rigging. He also called the inaugural National Assembly session unconstitutional, saying the first members must be elected to the reserved seats in the House.

Zartaj Gul stressed her loyalty towards the PTI, explaining that some politi-

cal alliances had to be made keeping in view the current circumstances. She expressed gratitude to the Sunni Ittehad Council and MWM, expressing confidence in them.

She remarked that she rise her voice in parliament for the public, political prisoners, and the party leadership, adding that she had been solely voted in the name of the PTI.

Moreover, JUI-F's Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri and PML-N Senator Nuzhat Sadiq have stepped down from their respective seats as senators. They tendered their resignations to Senate Chairman Sadiq Janjani. Both are set to take oaths as MNAs today.

PPP's Yousaf Raza Gilani also announced to vacate his Senate seat to take oath as an MNA. "The party will decide what role I will get in the new government," he told the media.

"PTI letter anti-national"

Arriving at the Parliament House, PML-N President and prime minister in waiting, Shehbaz Sharif, called the letter written by the PTI to the International Monetary Fund another anti-national move. "After the cipher, this letter is another proof of the PTI's anti-state interests," he remarked.

Shehbaz further insisted that there should be no doubt now that PTI Founder Imran Khan wants destruction of the country. He regretted and condemned the letter written to the IMF. "No Pakistani, despite political differences, will resort to anti-national activities," he asserted.

PML-N leader Hamza

Assembly and would be submitted till 2 p.m. on Saturday (March 2).

The scrutiny of nomination papers would be completed by 3 p.m. on the same day (Saturday).

The election for the Prime Minister would be conducted through division of members in the House.

As per the Constitution, before the voting process begins for the slot of Prime Minister, "bells" will ring for five minutes inside the Parliament House to inform every member - in case they are not present in the chamber at the moment - to gather inside. Once the process begins, the doors will be locked, and no one will be allowed to enter or leave the hall till the PM's election is concluded.

Under the supervision of the Speaker, voting will be held through division. For example, if there are two candidates, the Speaker will say that 'whoever wants to vote for candidate A can go to lobby A' and 'whoever wants to vote for candidate B, can go to lobby B'. If there are three candidates then there can be a lobby C as well.

At the entrance of the said lobbies, there will be a member of the Assembly Secretariat staff who will record name of every Member of the National Assembly in the register. The whole process will be open and people sitting in the galleries will be able to see who votes for whom.

The political parties have to vote collectively and every member has to vote for the candidate that their party is voting for.

Section 91(4) of the Constitution states, "The Prime Minister shall be

elected by the votes of the majority of the total membership of the National Assembly. Provided that, if no member secures such a majority in the first poll, a second poll shall be held between the members who secure the two highest numbers of votes in the first poll and the member who secures a majority of votes of the members present and voting shall be declared to have been elected as Prime Minister: Provided further that, if the number of votes secured by two or more members securing the highest number of votes is equal, further poll shall be held between them until one of them secures a majority of votes of the members present and voting."

The Secretariat of the National Assembly on Thursday accepted the nomination papers from candidates contesting for the slots of National Assembly Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq from the Pakistan Muslim League-N submitted his nomination papers for the Speaker of the National Assembly slot, while the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) nominated Amir Dogar for the same position.

For the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly slot, Ghulam Mustafa Shah from the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Junaid Akbar Khan from the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) submitted their nomination papers.

The proposers for Sardar Ayaz Sadiq included Chaudhry Saik Hussain, Abdul Aleem Khan, Syed Naveed Qamar, and Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari.



SEHWAN: Devotees arriving to attend annual Urs of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, at shrine of Sufi saint Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, at Sehwan Sharif.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a meeting to review the progress of the projects launched for the rehabilitation of flood-affected infrastructure in the province, held at CM House in Karachi.

CM reviews uplift progress of flood-devastated infrastructures

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting and reviewed the progress made in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of flood-affected infrastructure and directed his team to expedite the ongoing works and pursue donors for funding where it is still pending.

The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by Chief secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangejo, Principal Secretary to CM Agha Wasif, Secretary School Education Dr Shireen Narejo, Secretary Health Dr Mansoor, Secretary Irrigation Niaz Abbasi, Secretary Works

Nawaz Sohoo, CEO Peoples Housing Khalid Shaikh, and other officers concerned.

Secretary School Education Dr Shireen Narejo briefed the CM that 19,808 schools were damaged in the floods 2022, of them 7,503 were fully damaged and needed to be reconstructed. Out of 7,503 fully damaged school buildings construction of 2020 was committed by friendly countries like the European Union, China and donor agencies ADB, Federal PSDP and Provincial ADP for Rs 60.972 billion.

She said the Sindh government has started construction of 431 schools for Rs 4.428 billion but the funds committed by friendly countries are donors agencies were in the pipeline. Some of the projects are in the approval phase.

The CM directed the chairman P&D to get approval for the projects from CDWP and other agencies and then pursue for release of funds. He also directed the P&D department to prepare a plan to reconstruct the remaining 5483 fully damaged schools.

The Secretary Health Dr. Mansoor Rizvi told the CM that the 1000 Days - Integrated Health and Population Program has been started for Rs 61,600 million with the help of the World Bank, Islamic Development Bank with a Sindh government share of \$30 million. The project would be completed in 2026-27.

He said the project's scope encompasses the refurbishment of 392 dispensaries, including equipment provision. It also involves the reconstruction of 121 Basic Health Units (BHUs), 97 Rural Healthcare Centers (RHCs), and 39 Taluka Headquarters (THQ) Hospitals that have been completely damaged. Additionally, the project will establish hospital-based blood banks at four DHQ hospitals i.e. Kashmore-Kandhot, Sujawal, Tando Allahyar, and Tando Mohammad Khan.

Punjab Governor says: Role of ombudsman is commendable in redressal of people's complaints

Independent Report
LAHORE: The Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman Khan, presented the annual performance report of the Office of the Ombudsman Punjab for the year 2023 to the Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a ceremony held here today at Governor House Lahore. Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Ahmad Raza Sarwar and administrative heads of the Punjab government along with advisors and consultants of the Ombudsman Office were present in the ceremony.

Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the role of provincial ombudsman is commendable in redressal of people's complaints related to public institutions. He said that he appreciates Ombudsman Punjab for embracing information technology and facilitating people. The Punjab Governor lauded the

initiatives like complete digitalization of the Ombudsman Punjab office. He said that extending the offices of the Punjab Ombudsman to various districts and providing maximum relief to the people was commendable. Governor Punjab said that the decisions of the provincial ombudsman are written in Urdu which is easy for people to understand and they do not need to hire any lawyer for it. Governor Punjab further said.

Rain alert issued in KP, CM Sindh declares rain emergency

PESHAWAR (Online) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued an alert about rains and snowfall in different parts of the province from today till Sunday.

According to PDMA, all Deputy Commissioners have been advised to take precautionary measures to avoid any human and material losses during the forecast period.

The control room of PDMA is operational round the clock and people can contact by dialing 1700 in case of any emergency.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has also declared a rain emergency in the province.

Chairing a meeting in Karachi today, provincial Chief Minister directed the concerned to remain high alert in wake of heavy rain forecast in the province.

It was decided in the meeting that there will be half day duty in all public and private sector educational institutions in Karachi tomorrow.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz being briefed about the Rawalpindi Ring Road Project.

CM directs authorities to complete Rwp Ring Road project by December

Independent Report
RAWALPINDI: Chief Minister (CM) Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif here on Thursday visited Rawalpindi Ring Road and directed the authorities to complete the project by December.

NESPAK and FWO officials briefed the chief minister on the progress of Rawalpindi Ring Road Project at Tehraiy site.

The CM was briefed that the project started in September 2023 and all the construction work would be completed by February 2025. All the structures on the way of 38.3 kms long

Ring Road Project had been removed for speedy construction work while removal of the utility services in the right of the way was underway.

24 percent work on Rawalpindi Ring Road project has been completed.

Five interchanges, 11 overpasses, bridges on 2 rivers, 6 canals and a railway bridge would be constructed under the project while 15 subways and 53 small bridges would be constructed on the Rawalpindi Ring Road.

A rest area would be constructed on the Ring Road.

The project was indispensable for ease of transportation of the citizens, Maryam Nawaz said adding, industrial zones would also be built on the project.

The CM said that the project would be a game changer for Rawalpindi, adding creation of the industrial zones would provide employment opportunities to the local people. Two years were fixed for the completion of the project and all-out efforts would be made to complete it before the deadline, the CM said.

Governor Sindh advocates coalition govt formation to lead country forward

HYDERABAD (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori on Thursday advocated the formation of a coalition government and urged all the parties to work together to lead the country out of the crisis.

He expressed these views while speaking to the media during the inauguration of the 772nd annual Urs celebration of Hazrat Qalandar Lal Shahbaz (RA).

Speaking on the occasion he said that Sindh is land of saints and people of this land are fortunate to be custodians of such rich heritage. He said that the progress of Sindh and Pakistan interlinked.

Governor Sindh appreciated the Urs arrangements for the

PDA launches tree plantation campaign in Hayatabad, RMT

PESHAWAR (APP): The Director General (DG) Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmoond launched a tree plantation campaign here on Thursday.

Under the campaign PDA in collaboration with IMSciences University will plant saplings at Hayatabad Township.

Babar, Surayya take oath as KP Assembly Speaker, Deputy Speaker

PESHAWAR (Online): Babar Saleem Swati and Surayya Bibi of Sunni Ittehad Council took oath as new Speaker and Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in Peshawar Thursday.

Outgoing Speaker, Mushtaq Ahmed Ghani administered the oath to newly elected speaker of provincial assembly, while the new Speaker Babar Saleem Swati administered

3 including 2 real brothers die, 2 injured, car plunges into canal

MANANWALA (Online): As many as 3 persons were killed and 2 were critically injured after a speedy car plunged into canal on Sheikhupura-Hafizabad motorway.

Those killed in the accident included 2 real brothers. The injured are stated to be in precarious condition.

A car on its way from Peshawar to Lahore fell into canal on Sheikhupura, Chapa Meenara Hafiz Abad road motorway. Resultantly 3 persons seated in car died and two were seriously injured.

Two among those who were killed have been identified as Fayyaz and Abdullah. The third person has not been identified so far.

On information the Rescue 1122 teams rushed to the scene and shifted the injured to district hospital besides handing over the bodies to police.

Rare diseases need government attention

Independent Report
KARACHI: In recognition of Rare Disease Day, Roche Pakistan Limited held a panel discussion and press briefing to raise awareness about rare diseases in Pakistan, and to emphasize the unmet needs of patients especially when it comes to awareness, funding and government support.

The panel comprised MD Roche Pakistan, Ms. Hafsa Shamsie, Roche's Head of Medical, Dr. Yasir Adnan



as well as paediatric neurologist Dr. Raman Kumar and hematologist Dr. Munira Borhani and Mr. Muhammad Ali Shaikh, Special Secretary Health, Govt of Sindh.

Ms. Hafsa Shamsie, MD Roche highlighted the fact that even for those who have been diagnosed, the lack of government healthcare spends and support makes the awareness about rare diseases, and access to these standard of care treatments is the other side of the picture. She shared that since 2017, Roche has run a Patient Support Program that has helped almost 25,000 patients with free of cost treatment for a number of diseases including Spinal Muscular Atrophy and Multiple Sclerosis.

HEC chairman inaugurates new Faculty at UAF

FAISALABAD (APP): English and Linguistics, Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Mukhtar Ahmad inaugurated the new Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) in order to strengthen arts and literary works.

A UAF spokesman said here on Thursday that the newly established faculty comprised of the Department of Islamic Studies, Department of



SEHWAN: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori laying wreath on the grave of Hazrat Lala Shahbaz Qalandar on the occasion of 772nd Urs celebration.

May-9 violence: ATC grants interim bail to PTI leader in 9 cases

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday granted interim bail till March 7 to absconding Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Hafiz Farhat Abbas in cases related to May-9 violence.

The court granted bail to the PTI leader in nine cases including attack on Jinnah House and Askari Tower and ordered him to furnish surety bonds of Rs 100,000 for availing the relief.

ATC Judge Arshad Javed conducted the proceedings on the bail petition of the PTI leader, who also appeared in the court.

PPP leader stresses constitutional limits for institutions' functioning

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) South Punjab President Makhdoom Ahmed Mahmood has reiterated the party's longstanding stance on the importance of adherence to constitutional limits by all institutions of the country.

He emphasized that such adherence was crucial for democracy, economy, federation, and overall stability of the country.

In a recent gathering at Makhdoom House on Thursday, Ahmed Mahmood stressed the significance of politicians understanding and respecting their political boundaries, asserting that the approach could prevent constitutional crisis like those witnessed on May 9. He highlighted the need for mutual respect among politicians, media, judiciary, and other institutions, stating that

15 dead, 1,359 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 15 persons were killed and 1,359 others injured in 1,271 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 604 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals, while 755 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The analysis showed that 731 drivers, 44 underage drivers, 185 pedestrians, and 458 passengers were among the victims of road accidents.

The statistics show that 249 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 275 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by Faisalabad with 95 accidents and 97 victims, and at third Multan with 75 accidents and 82 victims.

According to the data, 1,090 motorcycles, 86 auto-rickshaws, 136 motorcars, 26 vans.



PESHAWAR: Speaker KP assembly Mushtaq Ghani administers oath to newly elected speaker Babar Saleem Swati.

PDMA initiates development of disaster risk reduction policy

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the guidance of Relief Department, has initiated efforts to make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resilient against potential disasters.

In a momentous step, the PDMA has commenced the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Disaster Risk Reduction Policy with the support of the

DC for early construction of flyovers in Dera city

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Arshad Khan has underlined the need to start construction work of flyovers at the earliest to overcome the traffic congestion in the city.

Chairing a meeting here, the deputy commissioner said that two flyovers were being constructed in the city including one at Tank Adda and the other at Sabzi Mandi where snarl-ups had become a routine matter.



LAHORE: Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman Khan presenting annual performance report of the Office to Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman during a ceremony.

Necessary arrangements made regarding expected rains in city: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab Thursday said that necessary arrangements had been made regarding the expected rains in the city and decisions had been made regarding clearing choking points in the drains.

All concerned staff would be present on the roads during the rains, KMC, Sindh Solid Waste Management Board and Water Corporation had made a strategy for the expected rains, he said this in a video message.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that there was no such example in the past that such rains were expected in the month of March in Karachi.

This is the effect of climate change that is being talked about all over the world. He said that the leaves of the relevant officers and other staff in KMC and other related institutions had been canceled and all the officers and staff would remain on the ground. "Inshallah, we are trying our best to minimize the problems of the people and wherever there is a problem.



HYDERABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), Asif Mahmood Jah addresses to members of business community during meeting held at Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) in Hyderabad.

Identifying agro-ecological zones crucial for maximizing output of agriculture

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr Kauser Abdulla Malik on Thursday said that identifying agro-ecological zones was crucial for maximizing output of agriculture products as well as to achieve sustainable economic growth in the country. Addressing the launching ceremony of the updated "Agro-Ecological Zones

of Pakistan", he commended the efforts of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) scientists and also emphasized the importance of establishing a dissemination mechanism to engage all stakeholders. The report offered a comprehensive overview of Pakistan's updated agro-ecological zones, considering changing environmental conditions, he said adding that it was prepared under the directive of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, categorizing Pakistan's ecology into various zones and sub-zones with a specialized database. Chairman PARC, Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali highlighted its significance updated agro-ecological zones in identifying appropriate crops for diverse ecological conditions nationwide, which would help tailor agricultural practices to specific environmental conditions, maximizing crop productivity. He said that understanding these zones could lead to more sustainable and profitable farming methods, better resource allocation, contributing to food security and economic growth in the region.

WAPDA reviews land issues of Diamer Basha, Mohmand Dams

MIRPUR-AJK (APP): The Implementation Committee on Diamer Basha and Mohmand Dams, formed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan held a meeting on Thursday to discuss the status of land acquisition and resettlement of the affected people of the two mega projects. The WAPDA Chairman appreciated the progress made by the Sub-Committee and hoped that the remaining issues of household and missing chulha cases would be resolved soon. APP Correspondent Said. He said that WAPDA was very compassionate for the affectees and valued their sacrifices. The Commissioner Diamer-Astore Division briefed the meeting about the status of household and missing chulha cases and the terms of reference for the Grievances Redressal Committee and the Missing Chulha Committee. The meeting was also informed about the compliance status of the decisions taken by the Implementation Committee in its previous meeting. The meeting was told that the Diamer Basha Dam, being built on River Indus will store 8.1 MAF water and generate 4500 MW hydel electricity. It is expected to be completed by 2028. Mohmand Dam, being built on River Swat, will store 1.2 MAF water and generate 800 MW hydel electricity. It is expected to be completed by 2026. The meeting chaired by WAPDA Chairman Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd), was attended by senior officials from Gilgit Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Finance Division, PM Office and WAPDA. The meeting was convened on the request of the Sub-Committee on Land Acquisition and Resettlement for Diamer Basha Dam.

OGDCL, ISGS agree to collaborate for SUGS project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) and Inter-State Gas Systems (Private) Limited (ISGS) have agreed to collaborate for the development of the Strategic Underground Gas Storage (SUGS) project to address the challenge of surplus gas management in Pakistan. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between OGDCL and ISGS on Thursday, said a news release issued here on Thursday. The parties will evaluate potential opportunities in developing SUGS at OGDCL fields to enhance the country's energy infrastructure and ensure efficient utilization of gas resources. The SUGS Project is a critical initiative designed to establish storage facilities for surplus gas, particularly during off-peak seasons when demand is low relative to supply in the Pakistani market. Through the SUGS Project, OGDCL and ISGS aim to mitigate these challenges by creating storage capacity and facilitating gas-swapping arrangements with other stakeholders in the industry on commercial basis. Subject to technical and commercial feasibility, project involves the development of withdrawal wells, compressors, and connecting pipelines and the construction of storage facilities capable of accommodating up to 15 billion cubic feet (BCF) of gas.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of Association of Small Medium Enterprises (BVMW) Germany meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

Rupee stands at break-even point against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee witnessed no change against the US Dollar in the interbank trading on Thursday and closed at the previous day's closing rate of Rs 279.11. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.3 and Rs 282.2, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 30 paise to close at Rs 302.41 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.11, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen gained 01 paise to close at Rs186, whereas a decrease of 06 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 353.24 compared to the last closing of Rs 353.30. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged to close at Rs 75.99 and Rs 74.42 respectively.

Facilitate rescue & relief operations Ufone 4G provides free calls in Gwadar to help connect flood-affected families

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Gwadar faces a large-scale natural disaster caused by catastrophic rains and flash floods, Pakistani telecom company, Ufone 4G has announced free calls to help connect local families, and assist in swift execution of rescue and relief operation in the affected port city. The heavy downpour has inundated large parts of Gwadar, destroying homes and livelihoods, and rendering hundreds of families homeless, said a news release. A considerably large section of the local population is associated with the fishing industry, whose boats were wrecked, and businesses decimated by the deluge. As a responsible Pakistani corporate citizen, Ufone 4G has always stepped up to help fellow Pakistanis affected by natural disasters. The free minutes will help the locals to connect with their loved ones, alert authorities to their plight and request urgent rescue and relief assistance. The initiative is particularly crucial as the extensive flooding has disrupted communications channels and made it harder for people to find ways to recharge their mobile balance. Ufone 4G users across the affected areas will receive 70 Ufone to Ufone and PTCL free minutes with a validity of 7 days. No call set up charges will be levied on these free minutes. The modest support will inspire resilience and fortitude amongst the people of Gwadar to confront and emerge stronger from this adversity. The initiative mirrors the Ufone 4G sustained commitment to fostering social good and ensuring wellbeing of the communities it serves. The Ufone 4G family has expressed complete solidarity with the fellow citizens who are affected by this natural calamity.

Pakistan's exports to China increase by 44.53% in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to China witnessed an increase of 44.53 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. The overall exports to China were recorded at US \$1726.679 million during July-January (2023-24) against exports of US \$1194.639 million during July-January (2022-23), SBP data revealed. On a year-to-year basis, the exports to China also surged by 79.54 per cent from \$136.551 million in January 2023, against the exports of \$245.169 million in January 2024. Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to China decreased by 4.96 per cent during January 2024 as compared to the exports of \$257.978 million in December 2023, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 9.32 per cent in the first seven months, from US \$16.444 billion to US \$17.977 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the other hand, the imports from China into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$6959.768 million against US \$6464.217 million last year, showing an increase of 7.66 per cent in July-January (2023-24). On a year-on-year basis, the imports from China witnessed an increase of 91.49 per cent from US \$614.835 million in January 2023, against the imports of US \$1177.398 million in January 2024.

Delegation of small, medium enterprise Germany calls on KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Bundesverband mittelständische Wirtschaft (Association of Small and Medium Enterprises Germany) here Thursday called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali. The delegation, led by country head of the association Matthew Shaw, discussed various prospects of investment in merged districts of KP including mining, forests, sports, tourism and human development. The delegation expressed interest to work in collaboration with local business community and added that the association would provide needed help, training and resources to stakeholders for the purpose. Speaking on the occasion, KP Governor appreciated the visiting guests.

FPCCI rejected Implementation of Cess tax in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh President Federation Of Pakistan



Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) said that the KP Business Community rejects the imposition of 2% Cess on import on all imports into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is totally unjustified and unacceptable to business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This will result in price hike of essential commodities and hyperinflation. Atif Ikram further said that instead of giving relief to the poor people of the province, problems are

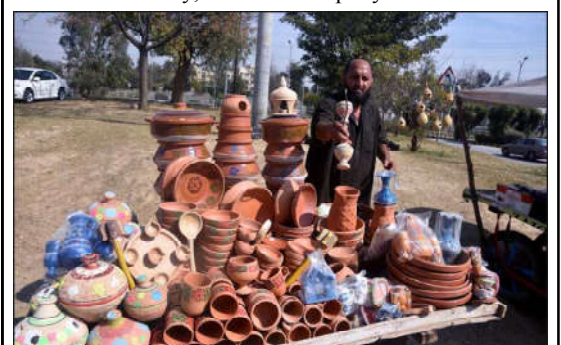
being created for the newly elected provincial government under a deliberate conspiracy by

the bureaucracy, which cannot be ignored under any circumstances while our country is already running in economic crises. He further said that the business community of the province and the importers and exporters are already in under burden of heavy taxes while the Cess levy of 2% on import and export trade by the care-taker provincial government will further increase the problems and complications which is to be condemned.

ICCI delegation visits POF to explore business chances in defense industry

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President visited the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) and held a meeting with Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah, Chairman POF to explore business opportunities for the private sector in the defense industry. Chairman, POF, Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah briefed the ICCI delegation about the role of Pakistan Ordnance Factories, which was the country's premier defense production organization. He said that besides meeting the defense needs of the country, POF exported its products to several countries around the world. He said that POF imported many parts and equipment to produce its finished products and said that it would welcome local vendors who could supply it with parts and equipment according to the required standards. He said that POF was the largest defense industrial complex comprising 14 ordnance factories and three commercial subsidiaries. He said that the surplus products of POF were sold in the civil market and the standards of POF products were not less than any international company.

He said that POF was the largest defense industrial complex comprising 14 ordnance factories and three commercial subsidiaries. He said that the surplus products of POF were sold in the civil market and the standards of POF products were not less than any international company.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranging and displaying clay made items to attract customers at his roadside setup at H-9 in the Federal Capital.

FCCI emerges as first E-chamber in country

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) has emerged as the first E-chamber of the country by starting a 24/7 online digitalise service to issue new as well as renewal of the existing memberships. Acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad renewed the first membership of his firm through this facility while Vice President FCCI Hajji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli was also present during the inaugural ceremony. Dr Sajjad Arshad termed E-chamber a revolutionary step taken by the FCCI to digitise its system and facilitate its members who could avail from FCCI services without visiting the chamber. "They could also make online payments," he said and added that arrangements were underway to offer other services to its valued members.

Rana Ayub assumes charge as CEO MEPCO

MULTAN (APP): Engineer Rana Muhammad Ayub assumed charge as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) MEPCO here on Thursday. The Board of Directors MEPCO has given him the responsibility after retirement of CEO MEPCO Mahar Allah Yar Bhabrawana after completing his tenure. Engineer Rana Ayub was considered senior most engineer in power sector and MEPCO. He started his service as Assistant Manager Planning WAPDA house Lahore in 1990. He was serving as General Manager Technical MEPCO currently.



GILGIT: A shepherd guiding herd of goats heading towards grazing field near Nomal area.

Enhancing nutritional standards, IFA organizes training in oil fortification

ISLAMABAD (INP): To enhance the nutritional standards, the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) organized a comprehensive training session on oil fortification for the capacity building of Nutrition International, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Food Authority, and local oil mill owners, and the training delved into the importance of fortification in combating nutritional deficiencies prevalent in the region. Highlighting the collaborative effort, the IFA spokesman revealed that Nutrition International generously provided iCheck Chroma equipment to bolster the operational capacity of the IFA. their significant health benefits. The training was attended by the representatives from Nutrition International, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Food Authority, and local oil mill owners, and the training delved into the importance of fortification in combating nutritional deficiencies prevalent in the region. Highlighting the collaborative effort, the IFA spokesman revealed that Nutrition International generously provided iCheck Chroma equipment to bolster the operational capacity of the IFA.

German inflation continues to weaken

Monitoring Desk BERLIN: Inflation in Germany weakened further in February, with the consumer price index (CPI) up an annual 2.5% this month compared to a 2.9% annual rise in January, according to preliminary data released by the Federal Statistical Office on Thursday. Economists expect inflation to fall further over the course of the year. However, the decline could lose pace due to an increase in the price of carbon dioxide, a key industrial ingredient, to €45 per ton from €30 (\$33) per ton and a return of the regular value added tax rate on food in restaurants. Higher inflation rates reduce the purchasing power of consumers, resulting in many cutting back on expenditures. According to preliminary figures, household energy and fuel became 2.4% cheaper in February compared to the same month last year. Food cost 0.9%.



LAHORE: A vendor selling coal sacks as per increased demand in winter season.

PR CEO announces plans for train restoration, improvements

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Railways Chief Executive Officer Aamir Baloch said on Thursday that train service would be restored gradually based on resource availability. During an online live e-Kitchen session, Baloch revealed that a new train timetable was set to be implemented from March 15 while the restoration of Sandal and Khushhal Khan Khattak Express trains was possible upon available resources. He highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance track conditions in the Main Line Sukkur Division and mentioned plans to increase the number of trains overtime, with improvements expected to reduce engineering restrictions. Regarding specific routes, Baloch indicated that the decision on restoring Akbar Bugti Express was pending. He assured the public of special Eid trains and improved facilities during the festive season. Furthermore, he noted a decrease in salary delays, attributing it to enhanced revenue generation, with further reductions anticipated in the future. In terms of infrastructure, Baloch mentioned the timely completion of a manufacturing project for 230 new coaches, with Chinese collaboration. He underscored the significance of passenger service over personal interests, emphasizing that train seats were meant for passengers, not employees. Addressing concerns about staff behavior and misuse of railway quarters, Baloch instructed the authorities to investigate complaints thoroughly.

FCCI greets CM Punjab

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Dr Khurram Tariq, Senior Vice President Dr Sajjad Arshad and Vice President Hajji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli have congratulated Maryam Nawaz on her election as the Punjab chief minister. In a statement on Thursday, they hoped that the new CM would ensure much-needed economic stability by involving the business community in policy making. They said Punjab is the biggest and most important province of the country which is playing a key role in overall national economy. Hence, the CM must adopt a strategy to spur the economic activities in order to create new jobs and root out poverty from the province. They said it was a privilege for her to become the first female CM of the province. "She should ensure mainstreaming of women.

Putin warns West of risk of nuclear war

Warns West against sending troops to Ukraine in major speech

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin told Western countries they risked provoking a nuclear war if they sent troops to fight in Ukraine, warning that Moscow had the weapons to strike targets in the West. The war in Ukraine has triggered the worst crisis in Moscow's relations with the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Putin has previously spoken of the dangers of a direct confrontation between Nato and Russia, but his nuclear warning on Thursday was one of his most explicit. Addressing lawmakers and other members of the country's elite, Putin, 71, repeated his accusation that the West was bent on weakening Russia, and he suggested Western leaders did not understand how dangerous their meddling could be in what he cast as Russia's internal affairs. He prefaced his nuclear warning with a specific reference to an idea, floated by French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, of European Nato members sending ground troops to Ukraine—a suggestion that was quickly rejected by the United States, Germany, Britain and others. “(Western nations) must realise that we also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory. All this really threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the destruction of civilisation. Don't they get that?!” said Putin.



A member of the press consoles a woman outside Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir el-Balah.

South Korea to send military doctors to hospitals amid doctors' protest

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: South Korea will send its military and community doctors to hospitals within the next few days as part of emergency measures to support the healthcare system after a mass walk-out by trainee doctors, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said on Wednesday. Han also pleaded with the young doctors to return to work by a Thursday deadline set by the government, and said the authorities would listen to their concerns. “The government fully understands that trainee doctors have serious concerns about the work environment and future career, and we are seeking measures to improve this from a number of perspectives,” he told a government meeting. Two-thirds of the

China urges largest nuclear states to negotiate a 'no-first-use' treaty

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: States with the largest nuclear arsenals should negotiate a treaty on no-first-use of nuclear weapons against each other or make a political statement in this regard, the Chinese foreign ministry's arms control department said. Director General of the department, Sun Xiaobo, called on nuclear states to fulfil their “special and priority responsibilities” on nuclear disarmament according to the UN Conference on Disarmament, which seeks to prevent nuclear war, official news agency Xinhua said on Wednesday. During the forum's weekly meeting in Geneva on Monday, Sun said the body should define a roadmap or timetable for an international legal instrument that would protect non-nuclear-weapon states from the threat of nuclear weapons.

South Korea, US to stage annual drills focusing on Korea nuclear threats

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: South Korea and the United States will begin their annual spring military drills next week with a focus on heading off North Korea's potential use of nuclear weapons, officials said on Wednesday. The Freedom Shield exercises, set for March 4-14, come as North Korea continues to test missiles and other weapons systems and develop its nuclear capabilities, and will be first since Pyongyang scrapped a 2018 inter-Korean military pact in November. The drills will be “tough and realistic”, and based on scenarios that reflect lessons from recent conflicts, officials from the two countries' militaries said at a briefing. There will be 48

Italian general suspended for book slammed as racist

Monitoring Desk
ROME: Italy's defence ministry has suspended a general and cut his pay for breaching army neutrality with a book that critics said insulted sexual and ethnic minorities, his lawyer said on Wednesday. Roberto Vannacci, 55, had already been ousted last year from the management of the Military Geographical Institute, and moved to an essentially administrative role as chief of staff of the operational land forces command. He has now been suspended from that position for 11 months, with the resulting “halving of his salary”, his lawyer Giorgio Carta said.



Relatives of the Azovstal defenders and other Ukrainian prisoners of war hold banners as they attend a rally calling for authorities to return their relatives from Russian captivity, on the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Kyiv.



Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers his annual address to the Federal Assembly, in Moscow, Russia.

More than 30,000 killed in Gaza, Hamas-run health ministry says

JERUSALEM (Online): More than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since 7 October, the Hamas-run health ministry says. That number equates to about 1.3% of the 2.3 million population of the territory—the latest grim marker of the awful toll of this war. The ministry says that the majority of those killed were women and children. Its figures do not differentiate between civilians and fighters when identifying those killed. In its daily update on Thursday, the ministry said 81 people had been killed in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 30,035. The actual number of

UN 'appalled' by public executions in Afghanistan

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: The United Nations on Wednesday condemned recent public executions in Afghanistan, urging the Taliban authorities to cease the use of capital punishment. Afghanistan's Taliban government publicly executed three convicted murderers in the past week on death warrants signed by Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. All three men were shot multiple times in front of large crowds that included the families of their victims.

Palestinians urged to reach Al-Aqsa mosque in Ramadan

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Hamas urged Palestinians on Wednesday to march to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque at the start of Ramadan, raising the stakes in negotiations for a truce in Gaza. The call by Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh followed comments by Biden, broadcast on Tuesday, that there was an agreement in principle for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas during Ramadan, while prisoners held by the Palestinians are released.

Alexei Navalny's funeral to be held on Friday in Moscow: spokesperson

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's funeral service and burial will take place in Moscow on Friday, his spokesperson said, after a search for a hall to allow his supporters to bid farewell to him failed. Kira Yarmysh, his spokesperson, posted on X that a service for Navalny would be held on Friday at 1400 Moscow time (1100 GMT) in the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God in the Moscow district of Maryino. She told people to get there early. Navalny would then be buried at the Borisovskoye cemetery, she said. Navalny, 47, died at an Arctic penal colony on Feb 16. His allies have accused President Vladimir Putin of having him murdered because the Russian leader could allegedly not tolerate the thought of Navalny being freed in a potential prisoner swap.



People look at election results at a monitoring centre set up in Dearborn by the Listen to Michigan watch party, a group which asked voters to vote 'uncommitted' instead of voting for President Joe Biden.

China says its coast guard patrols around Taiwan islands 'beyond reproach'

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China's government said on Wednesday that its coast guard patrols around a group of Taiwanese islands near the Chinese coast were “beyond reproach”, and dismissed complaints the boarding of a Taiwan tourist boat had caused panic. China's coast guard this month began regular patrols around the Taiwan-controlled Kinmen islands, which face China's Xiamen and Quanzhou cities, where two Chinese nationals died trying to flee Taiwan's coast guard after their boat entered prohibited waters. Taiwan said last week

Northern Ireland amnesty law breaches HR convention, says UK court

Monitoring Desk
BELFAST: A UK law granting immunity to combatants involved in the decades of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland known as “the Troubles” breaches the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), a Belfast court ruled on Wednesday. Victims of the violence challenged the law, which received royal assent in September despite widespread opposition from political parties, victims' organisations, the Irish government and the Council of Europe.

Spy row erupts in Australia over 'traitor' politician

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: Australia's government faced angry demands on Thursday to name a “traitor” former politician accused by Canberra's top spy of having “sold out” the country to a foreign power. In an extraordinary public revelation, Australia's director general of security Mike Burgess said a spy team from an unidentified country had cultivated and recruited a former Australian politician. “This politician sold out their country, party and former colleagues to advance the interests of the foreign regime,” the spy

Drones, snake robot enter wrecked Japan nuclear reactor

TOKYO (INP): Japan sent on Thursday two mini-drones and a “snake-shaped robot” into one of three nuclear reactors at the Fukushima plant crippled by a tsunami in 2011, the facility's operator said. The gadgets were deployed in preparation for the removal of hundreds of tonnes of highly radioactive fuel and rubble, a risky operation expected to take decades. “We sent two drones yesterday and two snakes today”, in addition to the “snake-shaped robot” on Thursday, a spokesman for Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO) told.

'Uncommitted' votes show Gaza impact on Biden

Monitoring Desk
DEARBORN: Joe Biden's campaign official said the team will continue to “make our case in the state — to both uncommitted voters and the entire Michigan constituency. The president will continue to work for peace in the Middle East.” Biden's staunch support for Israel during its five-month war with Hamas, which has decimated Gaza, has sparked outrage and a well-organised backlash among progressive Democrats and Arab Americans, with Michigan as their epicentre. They asked Biden to push for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, condition aid to Israel and for sympathetic Democrats to vote “uncommitted” in the primary to signal that Biden could lose their support in November's general election, aiming for 10,000 votes.

US seeks Israel's assurance for using American weapons

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The Biden administration has established a mid-March deadline for Israel to sign a letter committing to adhere to international law when using American weapons. Furnished by Washington, the letter also mandates Israel to facilitate humanitarian aid into Gaza, where over half a million Palestinians are on the brink of famine. Axios, a US news outlet, which has a copy of the letter, reports that on Tuesday, US officials in both Washington and Tel Aviv formally briefed their Israeli counterparts on this new policy. They provided them with a draft letter, essential for Israel to sign. According to a senior Israeli official, the US has requested written assurances by mid-March. This timeline aligns with Secretary of State Blinken's goal to certify them by month-end. Israel has the flexibility to designate the government representative signing the letter. Similar letters have also been presented to several other nations utilising US weaponry, as disclosed by a US official to Axios. This assurance is mandated under a memorandum President Biden issued earlier this month and indicates a shift in US policy towards Israel. The change follows concerns voiced by some Democratic senators regarding the Israeli military campaign in Gaza. Failure to provide the assurance by the deadline will result in a pause in US weapon transfers to the country. The Biden administration's latest push for Israel to adhere to international laws of war and peace is perceived by many as insufficient and belated.

European countries eye reopening embassies in North Korea after pandemic closures

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: A German delegation visited the North Korean capital of Pyongyang for the first time since its embassy was shuttered during the pandemic, as other European countries prepare for an anticipated return. A team from the German Federal Foreign Office was currently in Pyongyang on a technical inspection trip, a foreign office spokesperson told Reuters. “It is inspecting the site of the German embassy over a couple of days,” the spokesperson said, noting there was still no decision on reopening the embassy, which was closed in March 2020. Many embassies closed in Pyongyang because they were unable to rotate staff or ship supplies during the COVID-19 crisis. Already under authoritarian control, North Korea imposed some of the world's strictest pandemic measures, including near-total travel bans and large-scale border walls, and has only recently begun easing international restrictions. Britain, which closed its embassy and pulled all diplomatic staff from North Korea in May 2020, was also seeking to send a team, a Foreign Office spokesperson told Reuters. “We are pleased that some diplomats are returning to Pyongyang and welcome DPRK moves to reopen the border,” the spokesperson said, using the initials of North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. “We are in discussions with the DPRK government through its Embassy in London about arrangements for a visit soon by a UK technical-diplomatic team.” Britain called on North Korea to allow the international community, including all diplomats and UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs, to enter the country, the spokesperson added.

Indonesia awards presumed next president Prabowo rank of four-star general

Monitoring Desk
JAKARTA: Indonesia's president on Wednesday awarded Prabowo Subianto, his presumed successor and an ex-special forces commander, the rank of honorary four-star general, decades after he was dismissed from the military amid allegations of rights abuses. Defence Minister Prabowo, who took an insurmountable lead in the Feb 14 presidential election according to unofficial quick counts, was awarded the rank of four-star general by outgoing President Joko Widodo in a ceremony at the military headquarters in Jakarta. “This honour is a form of appreciation, it reaffirms devotion to the people and the country. I would like to say congratulations to General Prabowo Subianto,” he said, before attaching lapels with four gold stars on Prabowo's blazer. The award marks the culmination of a decades-

