

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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Sworn in as 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan

Shahbaz directs to prepare an action plan to revive national economy

Also directed immediate engagement with the IMF to advance discussions on the EFF

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday took the oath as the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

President Dr Arif Alvi administered the oath of office to Shehbaz Sharif, who was elected to the country's top office for the second time.

Held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the swearing-in ceremony was attended by outgoing Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and his cabinet mem-



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi administered the oath of office to Shehbaz Sharif, who was elected to the country's top office for the second time.

Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, other political leaders including Hamza Shehbaz, Aleem Khan, Raja Zafarul Haq, Ahsan Iqbal and Khawaja Muhammad Asif, and senior officers also attended the ceremony.

Later Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed the authorities concerned to prepare an action plan on an emergency basis to revive national economy.

He gave these directions while presiding over a meeting to review strate-

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on the matters related to economy



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir shake hand with Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during the oath taking ceremony of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at President House in the Federal Capital.

PPP fully endorses PM's offer for Charter of National Reconciliation: Bilawal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Bilawal Bhutto congratulated the newly elected Chief Ministers of all four provinces and emphasized the need for them to play their role in saving Pakistan's "democracy and economy."

He said that people did not vote for anyone to create a ruckus but to save them from this economic crisis.

Bilawal Bhutto stressed the need for discourse among all the lawmakers.

He said the Parliament was the mother of all institutions, and if this institution was strengthened, it

will be able to play their role in saving Pakistan's "democracy and economy."

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QUETTA: Activists of Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) are holding protest rally against the raid on the house of Mahmood Khan Achakzai, Chairman of the PKMAP, in Quetta.

IMF recommends Pakistan to jack up GST on medicines, petroleum to 18pc

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recommended the government of Pakistan to implement 18 per cent General Sales Tax (GST) on food, medicine, petroleum products, and stationery. According to details, the IMF experts have recommended the newly-elected government of Pakistan to end sales tax relaxation in its report dispatched to Islamabad.

The IMF team visited Pakistan in December 2023, and dispatched its report in February 2024 with a set of recommendations ahead of the FY2024-25 budget.

The IMF has recom-

mended bringing several dozen items under the standard rate of 18% GST, including unprocessed food, stationery, medicine, POL products and others.

The IMF estimated that rationalizing GST rates could generate 1.3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) revenue, which equates to Rs1,300 billion in national exchequer.

Overall, the IMF has called for the removal of all distortionary tax policy changes related to compliance, including the abolition of minimum taxes and additional taxes, as well as the abolition of the Ninth and Tenth Schedules.

Shehbaz farwell outgoing PM

ISLAMABAD (Online): A smartly turned out contingent of the three services on Monday presented a farewell guard of honour to outgoing Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif saw him off after the guard of honour and farewell meeting with the staff of Prime Minister Office.

CM Balochistan attends oath taking ceremony of Premier

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday rejected the Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) plea for allocation of minority and women reserve seats in national and provincial assemblies.

A five-member ECP bench, headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja, firmly stated that Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is not entitled to have reserved seats for women and minorities.

The Election Commission also stated that Sunni Ittehad Council is not entitled to avail special seat allocations for women and minorities. The ECP

reached its decision with a 4-1 ratio, with member Punjab Babar Hasan Bharwana, submitting dissent in a note.

The SIC submitted a plea in ECP claiming the allocation of seats based on inclusion of PTI-endorsed candidates within their party. This plea, conveyed by SIC Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza through a PTI representative, was submitted to the electoral watchdog.

Following the Supreme Court's ruling declaring their intra-party polls "unconstitutional" and stripping them of the electoral symbol of the "bat", PTI candidates participated in the

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CM Balochistan attends oath taking ceremony of Premier

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday allowed the transfers and postings of officials.

According to a notification issued in this connection, the ECP lifted the ban on transfers and postings imposed due to the general elections held on February 8, 2024.

The notification stated that as the general elections have been held so there was no need to continue the ban.

The elected government will now regulate all matters relating to such transfers, the notification added.

World leaders felicitate Shehbaz Sharif on assumption of PM office

ISLAMABAD (APP): Different world leaders felicitated the newly elected Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on assuming the office of the country's chief executive and wished him success during the next five years of rule.

Saudi Prime Minister and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in separate messages on Monday congratulated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for taking oath as 24th prime minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman wished Shehbaz Sharif success, and the people of Pakistan steady progress and prosperity.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey on Monday called Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and congratulated him on his election as the country's chief executive.

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In major blow: ECP rejects SIC's request for reserved seats allocation

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Presidential polls: Zardari, Achakzai set for showdown as ECP approves nomination papers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The presidential election in Pakistan is scheduled for March 9 when Asif Ali Zardari, the co-chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Mahmood Khan Achakzai, the chairman of the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), will vie for the prestigious office.

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq has called for a joint session of Parliament on March 9. The National Assembly secretary has issued a notification of the joint session.

The scrutiny of nomination papers for candidates vying for the role of president was held on Monday. The final list of eligible candidates will be released on March 5 (Tuesday).

Asif Ali Zardari's nomination papers have been approved after scrutiny, making him eligible to contest for the coveted presidential seat. However, Mahmood Khan Achakzai's nomination papers have not been approved yet, as reservations have been raised against them.

Achakzai urges political unity to overcome national crisis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party Chairman Mahmood Khan Achakzai Monday urged all political groups to collaborate in addressing the numerous challenges facing the nation and guiding it through the crisis.

Speaking in National Assembly on point of order, he said that Parliament should have more power and be the main center of authority.

He also highlighted that the country's constitution brought the people together nationwide and its sanctity must be ensured.

China appreciates statements of Shehbaz on Sino-Pak ties

BEIJING (INP): Spokesperson of China's foreign office Mao Ning has said that China has sincerely congratulated Shehbaz Sharif on election as PM of Pakistan.

During a daily press briefing on Monday, Mao Ning said that China appreciates the positive statements of PM Shehbaz Sharif about the development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Sino-Pak relationship.

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Bugti meets NP & BNP-Awami leaders; discusses political situation: CM vows to find sustainable solution to issues being faced by people after improving governance in province

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti visited the residences of President, National Party, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch and central leader of Balochistan National Party-Awami (BNP-A), Mir Asadullah Baloch separately here on Monday.

Also accompanied with the Chief Minister was central leader of Pakistan Peoples Party and Member National Assembly, Ejaz Jharkani.

Moreover, during the meeting with NP President, the members of provincial

assembly from PPP and National Party were also present.

They were included: Mir Sadiq Umrani, Ali Madad Jatak, Mir Liaquat Lehri Sardar Sarfraz Domki, Rehmat Saleh Baloch and Khair Jan Baloch.

During the course of meeting, the overall political situation of the country and province was discussed.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that he is desirous of taking all political parties along to put Balochistan on path of development.

He stressed that we have to find sustainable so-

lution to the issues being faced by people after improving governance in the province.

For the purpose, all political parties have to play their role, adding he stressed further.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that we are preparing a comprehensive roadmap of development of Balochistan and it would be our effort to benefit everyone from development in every nook and corner of the province.

He said that it would also be our utmost endeavour to bring remarkable improvement in all sectors including service delivery.

Condemns raid at residence of Chairman PkMAP: We are "war prisoners" not political in Balochistan: Sardar Akhtar Mengal

Independent Report

QUETTA: The President Balochistan National Party (BNP) and Member National Assembly, Sardar Akhtar Mengal has alleged that we are "war prisoners" not political ones in Balochistan and demanded of the authorities to release all political prisoners immediately.

The President BNP was speaking in session of National Assembly, Islamabad on Monday.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal criticized the government for not doing much for people of Gwadar, which is otherwise most affected due to the recent torrential rains saying that Gwadar, which is called the "orna-

ment" is sinking.

He said that it would have been better to provide helicopter for rescuing the people in Gwadar.

Referring the media persons, Sardar Akhtar Mengal said that they (media persons) try to show us the right path. He added that he was expecting that Prime Minister would make announcement for release of the detailed journalists.

The BNP on the occasion condemned the raid at residence of Chairman Pashtoonkhw Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), Mahmood Khan Achakzai in Quetta. Adding he also said that we are the war prisoners, not political prisoners.

ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif shake hand with Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari after the oath taking ceremony of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at President House in the Federal Capital, Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif also seen in the picture.

Raid at residence of Chairman PkMAP: Lawyers observe boycott of courts' proceedings in Quetta

Independent Report

QUETTA: The lawyers community observed boycott of the proceedings of courts against alleged raid at the residence of Chairman Pashtoonkhw Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), here on Monday. The call for protest and boycott of the courts proceedings was given by the Balochistan Bar Council (BBC).

According to a senior leader of BBC, Rahib Buledi Advocate, the lawyers didn't appear in the courts as mark of protest against the alleged raid at residence of Chairman PkMAP.

He condemned the alleged raid at the residence of Mahmood Khan Achakzai and termed it violation of chaadar and chaardeewari.

He said that Chairman PkMAP raised voice for supremacy of constitution and law in the parliament recently. Mahmood Khan Achakzai is also candidate for President of the country in the Presidential elections, he added.

It may be mentioned that the local administration got vacated a piece of government land during a raid on Quarry road on Sunday night.

US lawmaker calls for peace, justice in Kashmir

NEW YORK (APP): US State Representative Terry Meza has expressed her solidarity with the Kashmiri people and urged for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in Dallas, Texas.

Terry Meza was speaking at a meeting of the US-based Kashmiri Diaspora in Dallas, Texas on Sunday late, the meeting was organized by the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) led by Yasin Malik who is currently imprisoned in India.

The JKLF's acting chairman Raja Muzaffar also addressed the gathering and highlighted the plight of the Kashmiris under Indian occupation.

SC reserves verdict in Z A Bhutto reference

ISLAMABAD (INP): A nine-member larger bench of the Supreme Court (SC) on Monday reserved its verdict in a long-pending presidential reference, seeking to revisit the 1979 'controversial' death sentence awarded to former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The larger bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa heard the case. The bench was also comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin Ud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Justice Musarrat Hilali.

The SC bench reserved its verdict after the completion of arguments from both sides. "Not today, but we will announce our verdict soon," the CJP remarked. In the last hearing, CJP Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked that Martial law is not imposed by the army as an institution. Some people act as individuals. Sometimes there has to be a new beginning, so isn't this an opportunity for institutions to be indifferent to them by blaming for wrongdoings on the same individuals? The presidential reference was moved by Asif Ali Zardari under Article 186 of the Constitution, seeking to revisit the trial of the PPP Founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's murder trial.

Zardari seeks MQM-P's support

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman and nominee for president, Asif Ali Zardari 'sought' Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) support for the presidential election.

According to the ECP schedule, polling for the presidential election will be held on March 9 from 10 am to 4 pm. The nomination papers' scrutiny is being held on March 4, whereas the final list of candidates for the presidential elections will be displayed on March 5 at 1:00 pm. Sources privy to the development said, Asif Ali Zardari telephoned MQM-P's Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, a day earlier, to seek his party's vote in the presidential election.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari, leader of PML-N Mian Muhaamad Nawaz Sharif attending oath taking ceremony of Prime Minister Mian Muhaamad Shabbaz Sharif at President House in the Federal Capital.



GWADAR: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan inspecting roads damaged due to recent rains

Dr. Sharif recognizes efforts of Motorway Police's in ensuring road safety

ISLAMABAD: In a meaningful and appreciative meeting at Central Police Office National Highways and Motorway Police between Inspector General Salman Chaudhry and Dr. Sharif Saadullah Khan.

Dr. Sharif is serving in USA and Canada as bone marrow transplant specialist and hematologist for the past 25 years. Dr. Sharif is among the world's famous and most competent doctors.

Dr. Sharif's recognition of the Motorway Police's efforts in ensuring road safety on Pakistan's high-ways and motorways, as

adds weight to the commendable work being done by the Motorway Police. It's heartening to hear that their efforts are being recognized not only domestically but also internationally, indicating the impact they are making in ensuring safer journeys for commuters. Inspector General Salman Chaudhry's emphasis on the Motorway Police's commitment to prioritizing commuter safety and their success in reducing accident rates reflects a dedication to their mission. Their focus on providing moral support and assistance to travelers during difficult

Omar Ayub is likely to become opposition leader in NA

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) candidate, Omar Ayub Khan is set to become the opposition leader in the lower house of the Parliament, the National Assembly.

Sources have confirmed that the PTI founder has also approved Omar Ayub's appointment as the opposition leader.

APNS expresses profound grief over sad demise of Sardar Abid

KARACHI (PR): Ms. Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, President and Mr. Sarmad Ali, Secretary General of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society have expressed profound grief over the sad demise of Sardar Abid Aleem, Publisher and Chief editor Daily Millat, Faisalabad.

The APNS offered condolence to the bereaved family and prayed that Allah rest the departed soul in eternal peace and give them courage and patience to bear the great loss.



well as his gesture of gifting six thousand multi-purpose gloves, demonstrates the importance of collaboration and acknowledgment of those working diligently to improve public safety.

The acknowledgment from a renowned doctor like Dr. Sharif Saadullah Khan

facilitates their commitment to serving the public beyond just law enforcement duties. Overall, this meeting underscores the importance of collaboration and recognition in fostering a culture of safety and excellence in public service.

World leaders felicitate Shehbaz...

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The prime minister expressed his gratitude to President Erdogan for his gracious gesture of brotherhood and fraternity. He underlined that enduring people-to-people bonds, and strong religious and cultural linkages underpinned a robust Pakistan-Turkiye relationship.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also conveyed that Pakistan looked forward to welcoming President Erdogan for the session of Pak-Turkiye High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC), being scheduled to be held in Islamabad in near future.

Recalling strong bonds of friendship that exist between the governments and peoples of the two countries, both the leaders expressed their desire and commitment to work closely with each other to take the bilateral relationship to unprecedented heights of cooperation and fraternity.

They also exchanged views on the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza and reaffirmed their commitment for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question anchored in international law and in line with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon on Monday congratulated newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, emphasising that through joint efforts, both the countries would enhance and expand long-term bilateral partnership.

"I wish you, dear friend

Launch of Dr. Maleeha Lodhi's book "Pakistan: Search for Stability" at ISSI

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Studies Islamabad (CSSI), organized launch of the book titled "Pakistan: Search for Stability", edited by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi. Two other contributors to the book—Mr. Zahid Hussain, a prominent journalist; and Dr. Dushka Saiyid, a former professor of History at QAU—were also present.

Launch of Dr. Maleeha Lodhi's book "Pakistan: Search for Stability" at ISSI

The event was attended by eminent members of foreign and civil services, academia, civil society, media, and the diplomatic corps in Islamabad.

During her initial remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director of CSP, underscored the importance of Dr. Lodhi's book, which delves into the complexities of Pakistan's policy formulation in its pursuit of stability. Dr. Nigar stated that this book has the potential to greatly enhance people's understanding of the crucial subject-matter that it addresses. In his welcoming address, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted Dr. Maleeha Lodhi's extensive experience and valuable contributions to Pakistan throughout her long public career, including as an accomplished political

cal scientist, journalist, and diplomat. He also commended the other 18 eminent contributors to the book, analysing Pakistan's history, politics, economy, society and foreign relations from their respective academic, professional and practitioners' viewpoint and proposing a practical way forward.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood noted that Dr. Lodhi's latest book builds

upon her previous work and explores Pakistan's pursuit of stability amidst its current challenges, outlining the requisite solutions as well as strategies. In essence, he said, the book carries a message of hope and optimism, reassuring that it is indeed possible to overcome the challenges and to be on the path of recovery and renewal. Rather than overwhelming readers with daunting obstacles, it serves



The timing of its release is particularly opportune for learning and insight.

In her address, Dr. Lodhi emphasized the importance of seeking opportunities amidst crises. She noted that in Pakistan, political dynamics have yet to catch up with the socio-economic changes occurring in the country. Dr. Lodhi lauded all the contributors to the

as a reinforcement of self-belief and contains a call to decisive, achievable, and transformative action. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood further stressed that the book is a serious and non-partisan contribution to the policy discourse in Pakistan, serving as a valuable resource for policy-makers as they navigate the beginning of a new political cycle.

Shahbaz directs to prepare...

Continued from page 1

resilience.

During the session, Shehbaz Sharif was given a comprehensive briefing from the Finance Secretary on the current state of the national economy. Discussions during the briefing revolved around key economic indicators, challenges, and potential solutions to stimulate economic recovery.

On the occasion, the Federal Board of Revenue's clearance of tax refunds totaling 65 billion rupees was also announced, reflecting the government's proactive measures to ease financial burdens on taxpayers and stimulate economic activity. In line with the government's agenda to streamline operations and enhance efficiency, Shehbaz Sharif ordered the formation of E-committee to rationalize membership on government boards.

Moreover, directives were issued to expedite the transition to smart metering in the power and gas sectors, aimed at reducing line losses and improving service delivery.

The session concluded with a commitment to ongoing dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders across sectors to chart a path towards sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

ECP projects SIC's...

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elections as independents.

According to the Constitution, reserved seats are assigned to political parties according to the number of their representatives elected to general seats. Prior to the February 8 elections, the ECP had already received lists of candidates from political parties for this purpose.

Reacting to the ECP's judgment, PTI Senator Ali Zafar termed the verdict a blot on democracy and a violation of the constitution.

Speaking in the Senate, Zafar demanded the resignation of Sikandar Sultan Raja from the position of chief election commissioner and called for him to be tried under Article 6 of the constitution. He emphasised the significance of reserved seat quotas for political parties, stating that lawmakers in the National Assembly elect the president, prime minister, speaker and deputy speaker.

The senator criticised the ECP for depriving PTI-SIC of its rightful share of reserved seats, calling the decision unconstitutional and undemocratic. He declared that his party would challenge the ECP's decision in court and reiterated his demand for the resignation of the entire ECP staff.

Zafar also called for the postponement of presidential and Senate elections until a court decision on reserved seats is reached.

Subsequently, the Senate session adjourned until Wednesday morning.

PPP fully endorses PM's offer...

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would ultimately empower the masses.

"The people of Pakistan are tired of poverty, unemployment, and inflation," he said, adding "they did not give their vote for you to come here and abuse each other and create a ruckus."

Bilawal Bhutto asked older lawmakers to make decisions that benefit youth and future generations.

"Many of whom have

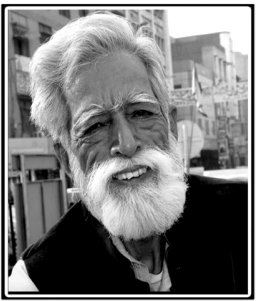
been in this House six times," he remarked.

"Past decisions that have been made have completely ruined the country," he added.

The PPP chief said he was disappointed by the "abuse hurled around" at yesterday's National Assembly session that saw PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif elected prime minister for his second term.

"What is the nation seeing? We have reached a dangerous point," he said.

CONDOLENCE




APNS expresses profound grief over the sad demise of veteran publisher and senior colleague

Sardar Abid Aleem

Publisher and Chief Editor of

Daily Millat, Faisalabad

May Allah the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the family to bear the loss.



All Pakistan Newspapers Society

Student of the Shaheen School & College Dabara, Tank visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House, Islamabad.



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HEC, WB Mission review progress of Higher Education Development in Pakistan Project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDP), a pivotal initiative spearheaded by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), conducted its 9th World Bank (WB) Mission on Monday to review progress of its project in Pakistan.

Over the course of a week, exhaustive discussions were held concerning each of the six project components, meticulously evaluating their progress alongside considerations of safeguards and fiduciary aspects.

The meeting was chaired by Executive Director HEC Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum and Project Coordinator Dr. Mahmood Butt, who warmly welcomed the Mission team members and commended the dedicated efforts of the HEDP team.

Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum underscored the significance of project missions, characterising them as instrumental in tracking progress, documenting lessons learned, and serving as vital checkpoints.

He also solicited the team's continued support for faculty training throughout the remainder of the project's lifespan, noting HEC's commitment to

conducting thorough evaluations of project progress. Ms. Inga Afanasieva, the Task Team Leader and Senior Economist at the World Bank, reaffirmed WB's unwavering commitment to bolstering Pakistan's Higher Education Sector through this project.

She emphasised the pivotal role of extending support to critical areas such as the National Academy for Higher Education (NAHE), Affiliated Colleges (ACs), Financial Autonomy of universities, and faculty training.

The joint review between HEC and WB facilitated a comprehensive assessment of each component's progress, culminating in mutually agreed-upon next steps aimed at maximizing support for the higher education sector throughout the project's remaining duration.

Highlighting the overall 83% project progress, the HEDP team presented a multitude of achievements, such as the award of 132 research grants including 43 Innovator Seed Fund grants, establishment of quality enhancement cells in 29 affiliated colleges (ACs), capacity-building of 3900 faculty members on

the revised Undergraduate Education Policy (UEP), and significant strides in enhancing access to the Pakistan Education Research Network (PERN), among others.

A notable aspect of the mission involved engaging project beneficiaries and academicians in a constructive dialogue at HEC Islamabad, providing valuable insights into the project's contributions towards bolstering research endeavors and elevating the quality of teaching and learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Additionally, the mission encompassed visits to prominent institutions such as the University of Education (UoE), Government College University (GCU) Lahore, and associated ACs, along with a tour of the Data Center established at the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore.

In a wrap-up meeting with Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, the WB team conveyed their appreciation for the hospitality extended by the HEDP and HEC teams throughout the mission. They lauded the substantial progress achieved since the last mission in July 2023.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Amer Ali Ahmad presides over the inaugural meeting session during the five-day study visit of the Ugandan delegation led by Aggrey David Kibenge, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development of Uganda held at BISP Headquarters.

Secretary Education call for consensus to ensure uniform policy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Mr. Mohyuddin Wani has said that a consensus should be reached with all the stakeholders to ensure that a uniform policy on education can be made which addresses the need of the hour. He was chairing a high level meeting of National Advisory Committee to formulate National Education Policy took place on Monday.

He said that all stakeholders including the health ministry should also be added in this forum. He said that the policy has to be all encompassing and should address all facets of skill education, vocational and

professional training.

He said that it should include a comprehensive strategy and an actionable plan to progressively diminish and ultimately eliminate the number of out of school children (OOSC), within next five years. Simultaneously, implement a program for mainstreaming.

TVET education with flexibility for students to transition into alternate technical streams. Special Secretary said that the curriculum should be in accordance with international learning standards, prioritizing a reduction in syllabi for compulsory subjects. Embrace concept - based learning with a focus on creativity and real-world application.

Emirates supports local charity in Islamabad as part of its 25th anniversary celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): In its 25th year of operations in Islamabad, Emirates Airline has stepped up to support children in the local community by teaming up with SOS Children's Village Islamabad.

The airline collaborated with the charity organisation to provide much-needed blankets to the orphaned students and their caretakers.

Emirates' charitable initiative, led by Salem Al Mana, Emirates' Regional Manager - Pakistan and other members of its local sales team, reflects the airline's ethos of giving back to the communities in

which it operates.

In addition to donating the blankets to the orphanage's management at its premises in Islamabad, the team also spent quality time with the children, engaging in exciting activities and sharing inspirational stories. By partnering with organizations like SOS Children's Village Islamabad, Emirates continues to uphold its values of enriching the communities it serves and supporting disadvantaged children.

"We believe in not only providing material support but also in fostering personal connections and uplifting spirits," said Salem Al Mana. "Our team

had the privilege of spending time with the children of SOS Children's Village Islamabad, sharing stories of perseverance, courage, and determination. Emirates is grateful to have been given the opportunity to bring some cheer to the children. It was a humbling experience for all of us."

SOS Children's Village is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing a loving home and family-like environment to orphaned and abandoned children. The blankets donated by Emirates will undoubtedly provide comfort for the children under its care, especially during the cold winter months.



Secretary Ministry Federal Education and Professional Training Mr. Mohyuddin Wani, Mr. Wani chaired a high level meeting of National Advisory Committee to formulate National Education Policy.

Delegation from Uganda embarks on five-day study visit to BISP office

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 17-member delegation from Uganda, led by Mr. Aggrey David Kibenge, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development of Uganda, embarked on a study visit to the headquarters of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Pakistan.

The Secretary BISP, Mr. Amer Ali Ahmad, who welcomed the delegation at the inaugural session, and provided them an in-depth overview of BISP and its multifaceted initiatives.

Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad highlighted the pivotal role of BISP in providing a safety net for those identified as beneficiaries in Pakistan over the past 15 years.

Under the umbrella of BISP, programs such as the Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT) - Kafaalat, have been instrumental in providing financial assistance to 9.3 million deserving families.

Moreover, BISP's Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs for education, such as Taleemi Wazaif, have enrolled 9.2 million children, while Nashonuma, benefiting 1.7 million expectant and lactating women and infants, has played a pivotal role in addressing issues related to nutritional needs.

Highlighting the core features of BISP, Secretary Ahmad emphasized the importance of the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) database, covering

35 million households and 88% of Pakistan's total population.

This robust database not only serves as a foundation for targeting beneficiaries but also facilitates timely and transparent interventions, particularly during pandemics and natural disasters.

In response, Mr. Aggrey David Kibenge, the delegation lead commended BISP for its hospitality and expressed keen interest in learning from BISP's experiences, particularly in managing the dynamic NSER registry.

He highlighted the potential for collaboration between Uganda and Pakistan to enhance their respective social protection systems.

Chairman Senate congratulates newly elected body of APNS

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani Monday congratulated the newly elected office bearers of All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS).

The chairman expressed his best wishes to the newly elected APNS President Naaz Afrin Sehgal Lakhani, Secretary General Sarmad Ali, Senior Vice President Imtan Shahid, Vice President Muhammad Aslam Qazi, Joint Secretary Syed Muhammad Munir Jilani and Finance Secretary Shahab Zubiri among other newly elected officials.

He in his message to the newly elected officials of APNS, hoped that the newly body would play an active role in promoting the welfare of journalists and high values in journalism.

Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani further said that APNS had played an important role in maintaining journalistic values, promoting freedom of expression and freedom of media in Pakistan.

He said that the leadership of APNS would play its key role to uphold the values of a free and responsible journalism.



ISLAMABAD: Former Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Senator Talha Mehmood in a group photograph during reception hosted for Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan and provincial cabinet on late Sunday night.

CUI, D-8 International University Iran ink academic accord

ISLAMABAD (APP): COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) and D-8 International University (D-8 IU), Iran, Monday signed an MoU already authorized by the federal cabinet of Pakistan to enhance their collaboration in joint academic and research activities including exchange of faculty, researchers, students, staff, scholarships and training courses.

The joint academic and research activities will play instrumental role for the development of faculty and administrative staff, joint training programs, convening of joint conferences and other areas.

In the MoU signing ceremony held at COMSATS University Islamabad Campus, H.E. Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam,

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan and Mr. Masoud Haghighi, First Counsellor attended the event.

D-8 IU Chancellor Professor Abbas Afkhami and COMSATS Varsity Rector, Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar, signed the agreement. Also from CUI, the following officials were present: Prof. Dr. Sajjad A. Madani, Registrar, Dr. Tahir Naem, Director (P&D/HRD), Prof. Dr. Sohail Asghar, In-charge, Islamabad Campus, Dr. Hammad Omer, T.I., Head, International Office, Ali Tawab Baloch, Senior Manager and Dr. Aqif Anwar, Head IRCBM Lahore. From D-8 IU, the participants included Milad Saki, Head, International Office, and Dr. Mazaher Ahmadi, Advisor to Chancellor.

World Obesity Prevention Day highlights alarming global issue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Today, the world marks World Obesity Prevention Day, drawing attention to the staggering rise in obesity rates worldwide.

The prevalence of obesity has reached unprecedented levels, posing significant health risks to over one billion people, according to research published in the British journal 'The Lancet'.

A team of international scientists underscores the urgent need for changes in how obesity is addressed, as it has become a pervasive public health crisis.

12 outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 12 outlaws including four professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary of Health Iftikhar Ali Shallwani presenting shield to WHO Representative Dr. Luo Depeng.

PPAF, NCSW celebrate Intl Women's Day

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), in collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, the Ministry of Human Rights, and the Punjab Government, hosted a National Women's Conference on Economic Empowerment in Islamabad to commemorate International Women's Day.

The conference emphasized the vital importance of investing in women's potential and acknowledging their invaluable contributions to society and sustainable economic growth.

A prominent highlight of the event was the awarding of the annual PPAF Amtul Raqeeb Awards to female community leaders from marginalized areas across the country, celebrating their resilience and inspirational leadership

within their communities.

Additionally, four special accolades were given to outstanding individuals for their exceptional commitment and innovation, setting the stage for further progress and excellence in their respective fields. The event was attended by representatives from government institutions, the donor and diplomatic community, academia, civil society, and students from educational institutions. During a welcoming address, Nadir Gul Barech, CEO of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), underscored the essential link between gender equality and sustainable development goals, including good governance, human rights, and environmental sustainability.

He highlighted the central role of women and girls in PPAF's initiatives, noting the significant impact that empowering women has on their lives and communities.



ISLAMABAD: Workers of Pashtun Khawa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) Punjab protest in front of Press Club in Provincial Capital, against the raid on the house of Mehmood Khan Achakzai.

Bright sunshine after torrential rains gives respite to city dwellers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Bright sunshine under a clear sky on Monday morning after the heavy rain and snowfall over the hills in most parts of the country during the last few days, provided much-needed respite to the residents of the federal capital who were bearing the bone-chilling cold. A large number of people came out of their homes and offices during the daytime to enjoy the warmth of the sunshine which was rare during the last days as minimum temperatures dropped to very low amid heavy rain.

The country had witnessed torrential rains along with hailstorms and heavy snowfall over the hills during the last few days which not only disrupted the daily life and traffic but also

compelled the citizens to stay indoors most of the time due to continuous rain with few gaps.

"The persistent rainy and cloudy weather compelled most of us especially children to stay within homes to stay safe from harsh chilly weather effects. However, the bright morning with ample sunshine today not only ended the hazy and rainy atmosphere but also restored the joy of the people who were fed up with sitting behind closed doors in front of heaters" Shaista Nazir, a government employee said. "After a long time, I enjoyed sitting on the rooftop of my office and had peanuts and oranges with my colleagues under the open sky and sunshine", she said while talking to APP.

ICP ensuring foolproof security arrangements in High Security Zone

ISLAMABAD: According to the details, following the special directions of



Independent Report Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is using all available resources to ensure the peace and tranquility within the federal capital, a public relations officer said.

He said that the Islamabad Capital Police ensured data registration, identification documents and effective search of citizens entering the high security zone on a regular basis. Moreover, action against 1491 vehicles and 432 motorcyclists over traffic rules violations on various checkpoints of high security zone was also taken.

During the last week, the Islamabad Capital Police removed tinted glasses

16-year-old boy crushed to death by speeding car in Shahkot

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 16-year-old boy killed on the spot after being hit by a speeding car while crossing road near G.T Road Toll plaza in Shahkot on early Monday morning.

According to details, Rescue official sources said that a speeding car, running on the wrong side on a one-way road, hit a pedestrian boy and claimed his life, a Private news channel reported.

Upon being informed about the incident, a police team quickly reached the spot and took the driver of the truck into custody.

action against 4,114 vehicles that violated traffic rules. Strict directions have been issued to police officers and officials performing their duties in high security zone checkpoints to exercise their duty with full responsibility. The protection of important public and private property and embassies located in the high security zone is of paramount importance.

The police officials were further directed to ensure the data entry of all citizens entering the high security zone, the identification documents should be thoroughly scrutinized, all suspicious vehicles should be searched and a positive attitude should be taken towards the public.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Nilofar Bakhtiar & CEO Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) Nadir Gul Barech in a group photograph during National Women Conference, Amt ul Raqeeb Awards distribution ceremony in connection with International Women's Day at National Library.

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Independent

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Prime minister's challenge

The new prime minister has taken the wheel. He must steer Pakistan to calmer waters at the earliest possible. Following a deeply contentious election, the opposition seems to be in no mood to let him get comfortable in his seat. He can expect a tough fight over every piece of legislation his government brings to parliament. In fact, some of the more hawkish lawmakers affiliated with the PTI have made it clear they do not intend to allow him to function at all.

Regardless, the prime minister cannot afford to let himself get frazzled. It is his responsibility to bridge the gaping political chasm and restore some sense of unity within the nation as he attempts to tackle its historic social and economic crises. It will, without a doubt, require immense grit and a large heart to take the country forward as one.

Since Mr Shehbaz Sharif has chosen to lead, he should demonstrate that his second term will be better than the first. He must appoint a cabinet of capable individuals, chosen not for their proximity to the Sharif clan, but for how well-suited they are to manage the portfolios handed to them.

This is not the time to dish out ministries and important offices as payback for political favours. The PDM government offered ample lessons on why this would be a poor mistake to repeat during a crisis period.

Considering how much has been placed at stake for Mr Sharif to get a second chance to 'deliver', he must deliberate with great care on who will get him the results being expected from his government. He should remember that his government will be walking a tightrope: policy confusion can quickly snowball into a national disaster. The PDM's last finance ministry was a case in point.

His other major responsibility would be to start shaping the contours of Pakistan's immediate political future such that the country can start to move on from the bitter unravelling of its sociopolitical order that marked the interregnum between April 8, 2022, and March 3, 2024. This will require the PML-N and its allied parties to, first and foremost, put an immediate end to any plans to further victimise the PTI and also to start a process to reconcile with its leadership and its supporters even if it means taking the difficult first step. It has been repeatedly commented that it was the hubris of the PDM coalition and its backers that the people of Pakistan voted against in the recent election. It would be a grave miscalculation to continue disregarding this as the new prime minister makes an attempt to lead the nation forward. Mr Sharif will need to show immense courage if he wishes to be remembered well.



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

Post-election, the incoming government is set to take charge amidst economic adversities. Though the hard decisions taken by the interim government supported by the armed forces have significantly contributed to economic steadiness by spearheading actions such as busting illegal financial networks, curtailing cross-border smuggling, deporting numerous illegal aliens, and addressing smuggling and trade malpractices that were bleeding the economy. Additionally, it also put its weight behind the government's efforts to secure financial backing from allied countries, through sizable deposits and their subsequent rollovers which helped in maintaining a critical balance of payments. The coalition government, too, made tough choices, like hiking utility and fuel prices, which, albeit harsh, were pivotal in stabilizing the economy.

However, Pakistan is still knee deep in economic and financial difficulties posing the new government with an immediate challenge: economic stabilization. The contraction of the real GDP, from a positive 6.2% in 2022 to a concerning -0.2% in 2023, coupled with projected modest growth of only 2% in 2024, paints a picture of economic stagnation. This decline in

economic activity translates to a reduced ability to generate employment opportunities, with the unemployment rate surging from 6.5% in 2022 to a worrisome 8.5% in 2023, with estimates suggesting little improvement in the foreseeable future. Further compounding this challenge is the significant escalation of the Consumer Price Index, which rose from 12.1% in 2022 to a staggering 29.2% in 2023, and is projected to remain around 24% in 2024. This rampant inflation erodes the purchasing power of individuals and households, disproportionately impacting their ability to afford essential goods and services, thereby negatively impacting overall living standards.

Furthermore, the nation grapples with the burden of substantial external and general debt, ranging from 80.7% to 76.8% of its GDP over the past three years. Additionally, the prevailing economic uncertainty discourages foreign investment which in 2022 was on \$ 2.7 billion compared to FDI of India which was \$ 80.2 Billion. This low level of FDI, further restricting the availability of resources for modernization and expansion, threatens the prosperity for its people and stalls the nation's development engine, squeezing household budgets and eroding savings.

Soon after assuming power, the new government would be faced with the daunting task of completing the last review of the IMF Stand by Arrange-

ment (SBA). Next daunting challenge would be to reach an early agreement with the IMF staff on a new medium-term facility, which is conditioned with carrying forward critical reforms on restructuring of the FBR, privatization of the loss-making SOEs including PIA, and the implementation of the SOE policy for improved governance and financial performance.

The new government caught between lack of fiscal and budgetary space and ambitious plans outlined in its manifesto will be in a deep fix. Pre-Election promises such as inflation reduction, targeted subsidies for vulnerable populations, job creation, and support for agriculture, revitalize industries at all levels, encourage youth entrepreneurship through accessible banking, and foster agricultural advancement through initiatives like improved seeds, subsidized fertilizers will need a lot of fiscal space. It also promised to provide affordable utilities besides healing the wounds in Balochistan and KP province, knowing very well that transforming promises is tough though not impossible. It would need the collaboration of stakeholders, political and non-political alike, to define the priority areas and set clear objectives with a time-bound deadline.

Though the clouds of economic and financial challenges are very thick, and many hard decisions have to be made, there are a few silver

linings as well. The monthly economic update for Feb 2024, noted restoration of market confidence which led to a pick-up in economic activity. GDP growth accelerated to 2.1% in Q1 FY2024, after two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The agriculture sector, the backbone of the country, posted impressive 5% growth and manufacturing activity registering 2.5% growth. The PKR has stabilized and the PSX has shown sustained performance improvements. The inflation outlook for the upcoming month points towards a downward trajectory owing to better crops and a smooth supply of commodities. The industrial activity in December 2023 remained positive, exports are steadily increasing encouraging business confidence coupled with exchange rate stability, contributing to a positive economic outlook for Pakistan amidst ongoing challenges.

To start with, the new government should fully activate three vehicles for rapid economic and financial stabilization, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and its agricultural sector.

Firstly, SIFC can streamline the investment process, particularly for CPEC projects. By minimizing bureaucracy and offering a one-stop shop for approvals, SIFC can attract both domestic and foreign capital. Furthermore, SIFC can foster pub-

lic-private partnerships within CPEC, encouraging innovation and job creation while ensuring the project's long-term sustainability. Additionally, SIFC can leverage Pakistan's diplomatic ties to broaden CPEC's scope, attracting international investment and maximizing its transformative impact.

Secondly, Pakistan's agricultural sector presents a wealth of untapped potential. SIFC can play a crucial role in attracting investment in modern farming techniques, storage infrastructure, and food processing. By focusing on value addition through processing and marketing, Pakistan can not only increase agricultural production but also create a more robust and profitable sector, fostering economic growth and prosperity.

Banking upon these gains, the new government should immediately develop short, medium and long term strategies. In the short term the government would need to curtail development spending though vital for long-term growth and must prioritize projects with immediate economic benefits and efficient implementation. Salary increases for government employees should be weighed carefully against fiscal constraints. Infrastructure projects must be chosen for their potential to generate revenue and jobs. Price controls and subsidies need effective management to curb inflation. In-

vestment in education, health, agriculture, and research and development remains crucial, but efficient resource utilization is paramount. Fiscal management, external debt control, job creation, and a commitment to transparency and accountability will be essential components of the government's strategy. Collaboration with international partners can provide crucial support.

Beyond immediate stabilization, medium-term reforms are needed. These include gradual deficit reduction, a comprehensive debt management strategy, improved tax administration, energy market reforms, and enhanced workforce competitiveness. Sustainable development efforts focusing on climate-resilient infrastructure and innovation will also be crucial.

In the long-term, human capital development through education and healthcare investments, combined with gender equality initiatives, will unlock Pakistan's full economic potential. Embracing technology and transitioning to a green economy will further drive sustainable growth. Adaptability, public engagement, and strong governance will be critical throughout this multi-phase recovery program. By taking decisive action and prioritizing the well-being of its people, the new government can navigate the current economic storm and emerge stronger.

Waves of terrorism

Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Historically, terrorism has evolved in its aims, forms, frequency, lethality, targets, and operation methods at various intervals. The changes underscore the shifting dynamics of terrorism, driven by global political shifts and technological advancements. In each era, terrorist strategies have been shaped by the technology of the time. While terrorism's underlying causes have varied across different periods, the common thread has been a group of individuals rejecting the prevailing system and resorting to violence to draw attention and achieve their goals.

The evolution of terrorism can be categorised into four waves — the 'anarchist' (1880-1920s), 'anti-colonial' (1920-1960), 'new left' (1960s to end-century) and 'religiously inspired' (1970 onwards). A 'wave of terrorism' represents a cycle of increased and decreased activity in a specific time frame, characterised by phases of expansion and contraction.

During the anarchist wave, anarchist and nationalist groups employed similar tactics and even shared training, highlighting the interconnectivity and influence among different terrorist ideologies. Diaspora communities became significant contributors to militant groups. This wave highlighted the counterproductive nature of political assassinations, leading to a notable reduction in such actions during the second wave. Diasporas would go on to demonstrate capabilities previously unseen in the second wave. Irish rebels in the 19th century benefited from financial support, arms, and volunteers provided by the Irish-

American community.

The kidnapping and murder of former Italian prime minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades in 1979 marked a significant moment in the third wave, underlining the continued importance of kidnapping as a tactic. Between 1968 and 1982, the world witnessed 49 international kidnappings involving 951 hostages, forcing companies to insure their executives against kidnappings. This wave also saw renewed efforts in political assassinations. The IRA and its offshoots were responsible for killing two British ambassadors in 1976 and 1979, Lord Mountbatten in 1979, and of unsuccessful attempts on the lives of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Additionally, the Black September group assassinated Jordan's prime minister in 1971. It was during this wave that the term 'international terrorism' became widespread, as militant groups engaged in coordinated attacks, kidnappings, and hijackings. In Latin America and the Middle East, the US emerged as a primary target, with a third of all international terrorist acts aimed at American interests.

Despite the eventual defeat of revolutionary terrorists by the end of the third wave, international counterterrorism cooperation faced challenges, evidenced by instances like France's refusal to extradite suspects from the PLO, Red Brigade, and ETA to West Germany, Italy, and Spain, respectively. However, efforts to enhance global collaboration against terrorism led to the signing of international, including UN, conventions from 1970 to 1999, aimed at prohibiting hijacking and hostage-taking.

The fourth wave has been characterised by a

misinterpretation of religion as a dominant factor, with militant groups leveraging the internet for recruitment, radicalisation, and fundraising. They have also mastered the use of social media platforms to disseminate sophisticated propaganda. This wave stands apart from its predecessors, driven not by political ambitions but by a distorted interpretation of religious doctrines. Advocates of religiously motivated terrorism contend that the eradication of perceived evil justifies the use of militancy. Events such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution played a role in propelling religious fundamentalism into prominence, whereas groups like the Tamil Tigers attempted to maintain a secular image.

In 1901, president Roosevelt rallied for a crusade to eliminate terrorism globally, and a century later, in September 2001, president George W. Bush proclaimed a "war that would continue until every terrorist group with global reach had been identified, halted, and defeated". This repetition of resolve over a century later underscores the necessity for major powers to understand why history has repeated itself and why they failed to create history. The critical question now is whether the current wave, driven primarily by religious motivation, will persist or conclude by 2025. The global nature of terrorism calls for enhanced international collaboration, including the establishment of MOUs, mutual legal assistance, and extradition treaties, as crucial measures for combating terrorism and minimising the influence of violent non-state entities. -- Courtesy Dawn

Climate stresses

Huma Yusuf

Last week offered a juxtaposition that captures Pakistan's predicament. In Lahore, PTI supporters took to the streets to protest rigging and the lawfare against Imran Khan. Meanwhile, in Balochistan, lashing rain led to flooding dire enough to uproot houses, wash away roads, and paralyse trade.

Our political crises and elite bargaining always come at the expense of governance and service delivery. Democracy — in its true sense, not a hybrid facade — is a prerequisite for a functioning government that can provide prosperity and protection. But while we fight for the former, we are losing hope of achieving the latter.

The flooding in Balochistan is the latest reminder that climate change-related disasters remain among the top challenges for our country. And these disasters are not tragic one-off events that can be mopped up with a quick dab of emergency relief and rescue. Each disaster has social, political and security implications that extend for years. Today's floods are tomorrow's famine, protest movements, insurgency.

Balochistan is a particularly dire example of how climate change-related stresses will exacerbate fragility and potentially fuel conflict. A 2021 survey by the IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Class found that 25 per cent of Balochistan's rural population was food-insecure, with some districts facing emergency-level food shortages. Given that more than half the province's population relies on agriculture or livestock-related activities for their livelihood, this food insecurity can partly be attributed to drought and climate change

more widely. Other drivers are food inflation, soaring fuel prices and livestock diseases.

The current flooding will exacerbate food insecurity. Flooding will destroy agrarian families' food stocks, usually amounting to three to six months' sustenance. Other farm inputs — stored harvests, seeds, fertilisers — are also subject to damage during flooding.

The same survey found that 64pc of the province's farming households struggled to sell their produce, propelling a vicious circle of food insecurity. This was because of difficult access to markets, either due to poor infrastructure that led to transport delays and crop damage or the high cost of transportation. Last week's rains will worsen this situation: the roads that have dissolved will take months, if not years, to repair, impairing mobility. Local fuel costs will likely soar, following disruption to Pakistan-Iran border routes due to flooding. Secondary sources of income such as inter-provincial or cross-border trading will be hard hit.

Add other dynamics to this food insecurity, and it becomes apparent that Balochistan's intersecting challenges may soon feel insurmountable. Consider the long-running grievance of the coastal fishing community, which has increasingly protested against illegal trawling resulting in depleted fish reserves. This is another community that for both climate-related and geopolitical reasons finds its livelihood threatened.

Research shows that a local temperature rise of 0.5 degrees Celsius increases the likelihood of conflict by 10 to 20pc as climate change drives resource competition. Balochistan's already explosive political dynamics

— rooted in valid historical grievances over resource extraction and state excesses, particularly disappearances — will further ignite due to climate change-driven resource scarcity. Unless, of course, someone does something about this spiralling conflict.

However, climate disasters can also create opportunities to demonstrate that a state is capable of effective, inclusive service delivery, thereby building trust. District administrations, disaster management authorities, the army and navy quickly commenced relief and rescue operations in Balochistan. The founder of the Haq Do Tehreek, which has campaigned for fisherfolk and broader Baloch rights, in his new position as MPA also did the rounds.

Can this responsiveness be sustained? Plans to address climate change and natural disaster-related food insecurity, resource competition and political fragility have to be nuanced, localised and adaptive. Resource-sharing arrangements between stressed communities have to be carefully negotiated to prevent conflict from flaring. Such grassroots interventions are the work of local governments and civil society, not security forces or law-enforcement agencies. And so it comes full circle: the need for meaningful democracy to enable climate responsiveness.

This is where the Lahore protests connect with the Balochistan floods. Both the PML-N and PPP made ambitious climate-related promises in their poll manifestos. Now with a governance mandate, however problematically delivered, the parties have a chance to show that they can deliver for the people. -- Courtesy Dawn

CM Maryam surprises students with unannounced visit to Govt Pilot School

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif paid a surprise visit to Govt Pilot Secondary Girls School Wadhat Colony here on Monday. She quietly sat with the students in the class, which surprised and pleased the students upon seeing the CM among them. An Urdu revision test was being conducted in the eighth class; the CM asked the students about the titles of their essays. She sat with a student Noor Fatima at her desk and conversed with her. Maryam Nawaz praised the student for giving the correct answer. The CM encouraged

the students to keep their classrooms clean upon seeing an empty wrapper and asked the teacher to continue with the test and teaching work. She inquired from the students about their issues and necessities; to which the students demanded improvement in the library, lab and arrangements for events in the school. The CM visited the examination centers for the tenth-grade board exams and quietly inspected the examination process. She stopped officials from disturbing the students. The CM visited other sections of the eighth class where glasses of the

classroom doors were broken and the walls were damp. She went to the library, biology lab and sports room. She also visited the school stadium and directed to improve it. Maryam Nawaz took photos with the position holders of board games and gave them autographs. The CM also took a group photo at the request of the school staff, noted her impressions in the visitor's book and appreciated the interaction with the students. Former senator Pervez Rasheed, assembly member Sania Ashiq, chief secretary and others were also present.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif during a surprise visit to the Government Girls Pilot Secondary School Wadhat Colony Lahore, met the teachers and students, visited the classrooms, science lab and instructed the administration to improve them.

Peace, security top priority: Amin Gandapur

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, stated on Monday that peace and security will be the top priority of his government, with no compromise to be made. Speaking to the media in Charsadda, he emphasized that the police force would be provided with necessary financial resources on a priority basis. He assured that the police would be ensured provision of vehicles and other necessary equipment. He highlighted that

development and prosperity are not possible without peace and security in the region. He also mentioned that the reduction in poverty, provision of employment opportunities to people, and uplift of weaker sections are the second important priorities of the provincial government. Furthermore, he stated that construction and development of infrastructure will be the third important priority. The Chief Minister clarified that when he talked about reforms in the police, it should not be

perceived as a threat. He emphasized, "We do not believe in retaliatory actions, but reform is our duty." He expressed the desire for a system where no one can commit violence or injustice against anyone else, aiming for a better and fair system for the coming generations. Earlier, he offered condolences to the family of martyred SP Ijaz Khan in Sherpao village, Charsadda and met with the children of the martyred. He praised the bravery and sacrifices of the police in the line of duty.

06 dead, 1378 injured in 1274 road traffic crashes in Punjab

Independent Report
LAHORE: The Emergency Services Department (ESD) responded to 1274 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. In these RTCs, 06 people died, whereas 1274 were injured. Out of these, 610 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 768 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of Hospitals. The majority (73%) involved Motorbikes, therefore effective enforcement of traffic laws and lane discipline are essential to reduce the increasing number of road traffic crashes.

Furthermore, the analysis showed those 667 drivers, 58 underage drivers, 160 pedestrians, and 557 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics show that 252 RTCs were reported in Lahore which affected 280 persons placing the Provincial Capital at top of the list followed by Faisalabad 115 in with 142 victims and at third Gujranwala with 88 RTCs and 87 victims. The details further reveal that 1384 victims were affected by road traffic crashes including 1068 males & 316 females, while the age group of the victims shows that 226 were under 18 years of age, 705 were between 18 and 40 years and rest of the 453 victims were reported above 40 years of age. According to the data 1089 motorbikes, 73 autorickshaws, 148 motorcars, 30 vans, 07 passenger buses, 20 truck and 90 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in aforesaid road traffic accidents.



MULTAN: Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Rizwan Qadeer leading awareness walk about 'Clean Punjab Campaign' organized by the Waste Management Company.

All-out efforts to be made to provide relief to people: Commissioner

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak on Monday said that all-out efforts would be made to provide relief to the people and all the welfare projects of the city would be completed within stipulated time frame. The Commissioner along with Regional Police Officer (RPO) Syed Khurram Geelani chaired an introductory meeting with the newly elected 23 Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) of Punjab elected from Rawalpindi Division. He said all the welfare projects of the city would be completed in time along with elected members of provincial assembly. "Our commitment is to provide relief to the people with the help of the political leaders," the Commissioner said. The administration and the elected representatives would play their constructive role to solve the problems of the people, he added. Engr. Aamir Khattak said that the primary responsibility of the administration is to serve the people. The suggestions of

the newly elected members of the provincial assembly would also be utilized for the completion of all the projects including Rawalpindi Ring Road and Dadocha Dam projects, the Commissioner informed. He said that practical steps would be taken in the light of the orders of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. All the stakeholders were playing their practical role in the implementation of the public welfare projects, he said adding, no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. The Commissioner said that every officer had been instructed to give a timeline on the files coming to him. It should be ensured that there is no unnecessary delay in any work, he instructed the officers. The newly elected representatives should also be part of the process to ensure transparency of the Ramazan package, he said. He urged the MPAs to go to the field and monitor distribution of the Ramazan package and in case of any deficiency, the issue could be brought to the notice of the administration so that the problem.



KARACHI: Vice President Human Resource Development (HRD) Service of Korea Kim Sung Jae along with Federal Secretary Ministry of OP&HRD Dr. Arshad Mahmood inaugurating 2nd Korean Computer Based Testing (CBT) Lab.

1st national immigration, welfare policy in its final stages: Dr. Arshad

KARACHI (APP): The Federal Secretary of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Dr. Arshad Mahmood on Monday said that they were about to finalize their first National Immigration and Welfare Policy. He said that the policy had many promising offers for the youth and about their proper selection, training and welfare benefits. While addressing the inauguration ceremony of 2nd Korean Computer Based Testing (CBT) Laboratory here, the Secretary Dr. Arshad Mahmood said that approximately 10 million people were living abroad and they send \$31 billion remittances.

He said that the Ministry was trying to restructure itself. Vice President of Human Resource Development (HRD) Service of Korea Kim Sung Jae and Consul General of Republic of Korea to Karachi Yi Sungho were also present on the occasion. Mahmood said that Korea pick up right kind of people and the emerging youth and train them. He lauded the pragmatism of South Korean government and their system. The Secretary said that the Korean model put the youth on a decent work profile. He said, "We would love to replicate this model for so many other countries."

ANF recovers 128 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover more than 128 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 40 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Jeddah at Peshawar Airport. 63 kg hashish was recovered from Zakhakhel Khyber area and 58.8 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects rounded up near National Highway Hyderabad. In fourth operation, 4.8 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested from Noor Shah Road Sahiwal. 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from the accused netted near G.T Road Suhawa Jhelum. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

KP assembly approves over Rs.159 billion for one month budget

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly with Speaker, Babar Salim Swati in chair Tuesday approved one month budget of over Rs. 159 billion for the province. KP Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur moved the motion for budget approval under rule 150 of the Provincial Assembly Procedure and Conduct Rules. Among Rs. 159 billion, Rs. 40 billion rupees are reserved for ongoing developmental schemes under Annual Development Program. While Rs. 118 billion are earmarked for running

expenditure. The motion was put to vote and was passed with majority. Meanwhile, leader of opposition, Dr. Ibadullah rejected the move over arguments that cabinet is not formed and such passage is illegal. Parliamentary leader of PPP, Ahmad Karim Kundi supported viewpoint of Ibadullah of PML (N). The Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur also presented a motion for ongoing developmental schemes as polling station for upcoming Presidential Elections to be held on March 9.

LHC dismisses plea against Aurat March

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday dismissed, as not maintainable, a petition seeking directions to stop the upcoming Aurat March. Justice Shahid Karim announced the reserved verdict on a petition filed by a citizen, Azam Butt. The court had reserved the verdict on maintainability of the petition, after hearing initial arguments, earlier. The petitioner, through the petition, had implored deputy commissioner Lahore and others as respondents. The petitioner had sought directions to restrain the march, arguing that its banners and slogans were not suitable for Islamic society.

Relief supplies dispatched to rain, landslide affected areas: DG PDMA

PESHAWAR (APP): On the special instructions of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, more relief materials have been sent to the people affected by the rains and landslides. Director General of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Qaiser Khan said in a statement issued here Monday that nine trucks

of relief goods have been sent to Battagram, Kohistan Upper and Bajaur. The relief goods include rugs, tents, mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, plastic mats, sandbags and tarpaulins. He said that equipment has already been provided to other districts administrations for distribution among affected people.



PESHAWAR: Polio worker administering polio drops to children at local school during anti-polio vaccination campaign in Provincial Capital.

NCRC concludes Provincial Consultation

PESHAWAR (Online): In an effort to address the critical issues plaguing education access and quality in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) organized a pivotal provincial consultation on Free & Compulsory Education. A diverse array of stakeholders, including academia, social welfare advocates, media representatives, and political leaders, gathered to confront the challenges head-on. The consultation

uncovered a myriad of pressing concerns, including the pervasive influence of economic challenges hindering children's access to education. Moreover, the alarming dropout rates among girls, primarily driven by socio-cultural norms, demand immediate attention. Urgent infrastructural enhancements are imperative, as evidenced by the dire state of many schools. Despite the constitutional mandate stipulating free and compulsory education for all children aged five,

Ibadullah notified as oppo. leader in KP assembly

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial assembly secretariate of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly notified Ibadullah Khan, a member of the assembly as the leader of opposition here on Monday. The notification has been issued under Clause (1) of sub-rule (1) of rule 2 of the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Procedure and Conduct of Business Rules, 1988. Ibadullah Khan is a PML-N affiliated MPA elected from the provincial assembly constituency PK-30 Shangla-III. He will be entitled to all the facilities provided under Section 3A of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Salaries and Allowances of Members) Act, 1974.

Two dacoit gangs busted; four arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police here on Monday busted two dacoit gangs and recovered two motorcycles, a mobile phone, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Wah Cantt police held four dacoits, members of two gangs namely Izatullah, Ghulam Saed, Ali Abbas and Azlan. Police also recovered two motorcycles, a mobile phone, weapons and other items from their possession.



RAWALPINDI: Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi along with Chaudhary Muhammad Akram keenly viewing Science & Arts Exhibition of Punjab College of Commerce.

Dues of KMC employees to be paid soon after formation of the govt: Deputy Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad has said that after the formation of the Sindh government, steps will be taken to pay the dues of KMC employees and increase the OZI funds. He said this on Monday while speaking as chief guest at the opening ceremony of the five-day certificate course on local government system held at the Department of City Institute of Image Management at the KMC head office. Sources of revenue and recovery in KMC will be improved; we respect

the mandate of all parties in the City Council and invite them to join us for the betterment and development of the city, he said. Deputy Parliamentary Leader in the city council of Pakistan People's Party Dil Muhammad, former City Councilor Shamim Mumtaz Wasi, former Director Council, KMC Muhammad Zakir and other officers were also present on this occasion. Salman Abdullah Murad said that the process of formation of various committees of KMC Council.



GILGIT: Heavy machinery being used to remove snow from the road of Astore Valley by the staffer of Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority and Works Department after heavy snow fall caused land sliding in different area.

Six power pilferers booked in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) caught six power pilferers during an ongoing crackdown here on Monday. According to official sources, task force teams raided at various areas of the district and caught six accused involved in electricity theft from main lines and meter tampering. The task force teams also imposed a fine of Rs 262,551 on pilferers. On a report of the Fesco, police also registered cases against pilferers.

Three killed, two injured on road

FAISALABAD (APP): Three people, including a boy, were killed while two women sustained injuries in two accidents here on Monday. A Rescue 1122 spokesman said a speeding truck hit a motorcycle near Dumar Flour Mills on Narwala Road. As a result, Tariq Masih and his wife Shahnaz of Chak No 8-JB died on the spot. In another accident, a three-year-old Arsalan of Chak No 66-JB Dhandra was killed while his mother Nazia Imdad and grandmother Zahida Habib were injured.



LAHORE: Chairman Young Doctor Association Dr Sulman Haseeb addressing during press conference at Mayo Hospital.

PNQAHE Inaugurates 4th Annual Intl Conference

PESHAWAR (Online): The Pakistan Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PNQAHE) proudly inaugurated its 4th Annual International Conference at the Jinnah Convention Center in Islamabad, sponsored by Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi and Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design Lahore. In collaboration with renowned HEIs including Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, Riffah International University Islamabad, Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam, University of Child Health Sciences/Children's Hospital Lahore, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, University of

Swabi, University of Gujrat, Iqra University Islamabad, and Pak-Austria Fachhochschule, Haripur, the conference, themed "Fostering Excellence in Higher Education," aimed to address pivotal issues in ensuring quality assurance across academic institutions. The Chief Guest of this inaugural conference was Chairman HEC Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad. During her address at the opening ceremony of the 4th International Conference of PNQAHE, Dr. Aasiya Bukhari, Director of QEC-KMU and Secretary General of PNQAHE, introduced the role of PNQAHE in higher education and expounded upon its significance to the participants.

Pakistan to become largest Muslim economy in 10 years: Dr Gohar Ejaz

LAHORE (APP): Former caretaker federal minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz said on Monday that Pakistan would be the largest economy of Muslim Ummah during the next ten years.

Addressing the business community here at Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Office, he said that Pakistan has opened the doors of trade to China, UAE and other countries. "We are aiming to increase the country's exports up to USD 100 billion and we have brought the dollar rate from Rs 340 to Rs 280. We have worked hard and opened the doors of trade to China, UAE and other countries," he mentioned.

Gohar Ejaz said that China, America and the

Gulf region are major markets for Pakistani products, asserting that a policy has also been formulated that after three years, no raw materials would go out of Pakistan. He said that Afghan Transit Trade (ATT) had increased from USD two billion to USD 7.2 billion during July 2022 to June 2023. "The imports we had banned through LCs (Letters of Credit), had been reaching Pakistan through ATT, and the high US dollar rate against rupee was mainly due to ATT. Out of USD 7.2 billion ATT, we had banned USD 3 billion products/imports. As soon, we clarified the ATT policy, the US dollar rate went down significantly i.e from Rs 340 to Rs 280," he claimed.

He mentioned that usually, the interest rate

has to be kept higher than the inflation rate, and at that time, the inflation rate was 28 percent but the last caretaker government had contained the interest rate at 22 percent which was then also objected by the IMF. He said that 50 percent of employment opportunities in the country were created by the private sector.

FPCCI's job is to formulate policies and it should have economists to help guide the government, he suggested and added that the FPCCI should form a panel of five big economists who make a ten-year industry vision for the government.

The FPCCI Regional Chairman Zaki Ejaz, former caretaker provincial minister SM Tanveer, FPCCI Vice President Zain Iftikhar.



KARACHI: Women are busy buying handmade items on a stall at a local hotel, in the Provincial Capital.

Pakistani experts praise 'Two Sessions' for propelling global economic stability

BEIJING (APP): Pakistani experts have lauded the significance of the "Two Sessions" in fostering global economic stability in the context of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiatives.

They believe that the foreign policies and incentives for foreigners in China during these sessions are pivotal in enhancing economic cooperation and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Muhammad Asghar, a Pakistani journalist in China told China Economic Net that the strategic discussions held during the Two Sessions serve as a platform for fostering stronger ties between Pakistan and China, paving the way for mutually beneficial partnerships that contribute to global economic stability.

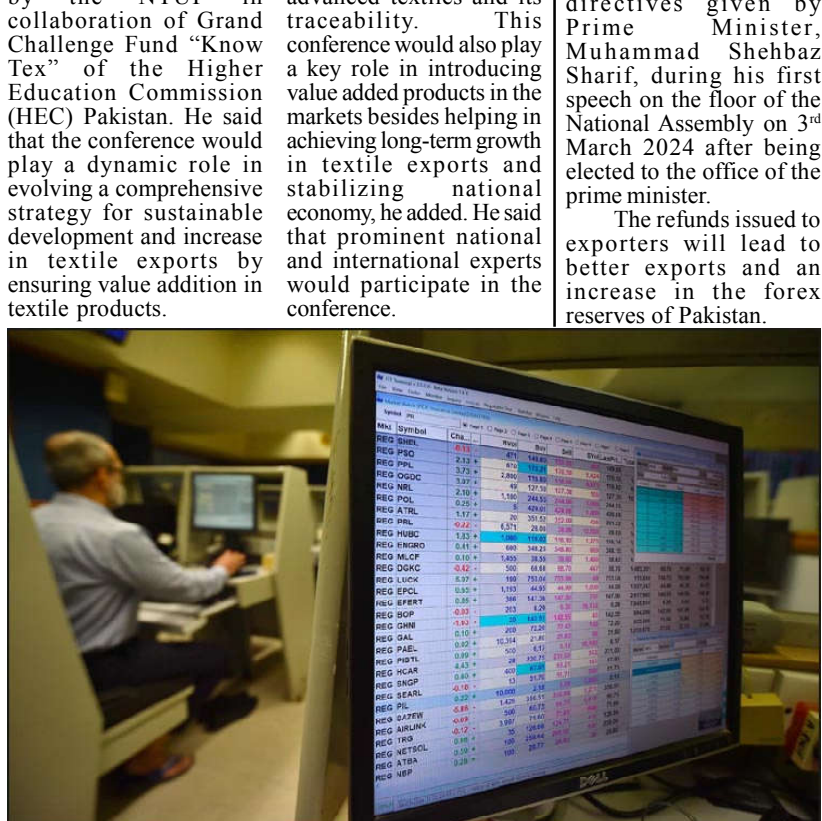
"I feel honored to attend the CPPCC Spokesperson briefing held ahead of Two Sessions in 2024. I'm attending different meetings and briefings during the six-day Two Sessions. I will focus on jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative President Xi Jinping launched a decade ago to build a community with a shared future. I'm lucky that I witnessed the previous five to six Two Sessions during my assignments which I have good experience of it", he stated. He further said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was a flagship project of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative. Several projects have been completed in Pakistan under CPEC. "I am also looking forward to attending Foreign Minister Wang Yi media interaction and also opening and closing ceremonies.

Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Mr. Faisal Shahzad.

Textile conference to start at NTUF today

FAISALABAD (APP): A two-day international knowledge-based textile conference (Know Tex) will commence in the National Textile University Faisalabad (NTUF) here on Tuesday (March 5). University Spokesman Sardar Pervaiz Akhtar said on Monday that this is the third international knowledge-based textile conference which would be organized by the NTUF in collaboration of Grand Challenge Fund "Know Tex" of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan. He said that the conference would play a dynamic role in evolving a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development and increase in textile exports by ensuring value addition in textile products.

He said that the conference would also provide a common platform to bring textile scientists, research scholars and industry experts for sharing their views, researches and expertise for modernization and innovation in textile composites, circular textile, functional & smart textile, natural fibers, textile production factors, advanced textiles and its traceability. This conference would also play a key role in introducing value added products in the markets besides helping in achieving long-term growth in textile exports and stabilizing national economy, he added. He said that prominent national and international experts would participate in the conference.



KARACHI: Pakistani stockbroker monitors the share prices during a trading session at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX).



KARACHI: Deputy Governors State Bank of Pakistan, Dr. Inayat Hussain and Saleemullah giving away Financial Literacy Awards to executive of winning bank at the launch of Pakistan Financial Literacy Week at SBP Auditorium.

Governor SBP inaugurates 1st edition of Pakistan Financial Literacy Week

KARACHI (APP): Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmad, Monday, said that SBP fully recognizes access to financial services a fundamental right, and SBP's mission is to empower every citizen by providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to participate fully in the economy.

He was delivering his key note address via video link to the inaugural event of Pakistan Financial Literacy Week (PFLW) held here at Learning Resource Center, SBP,

Karachi. The theme for the week is 'Digital Bankari - fori aur asaan'.

The event was attended by Presidents and CEOs of commercial banks, senior officials from the World Bank, Alliance for Financial Inclusion and other stakeholders.

The Governor said that an inclusive financial sector is not only important for overall growth of the banking industry but also augments monetary policy transmission channels and increases its effectiveness. Jameel Ahmad stated

that SBP has always been working on increasing the availability and utilization of financial services for people and businesses to meet their financial services needs in a fair and dignified manner. He said that the key initiatives taken for expanding financial services to the unbanked and underbanked segments of the society includes implementation of national level strategies and policies such as National Financial Inclusion Strategy, National Financial Literacy Program and Banking on Equality Policy.

Farmers urge government to stem inflation in input cost, regulate seed quality

HYDERABAD (APP): The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB), a group lobbying for the rights of the agrarians, has congratulated all the new federal and provincial governments, expressing the hope that they would give due importance to the agriculture sector which was confronting myriads of problems.

A meeting of the SAB here the other, presided by Mahmood Nawaz Shah, also drew the government's attention towards the problems which required their immediate attention and action, according to a press statement.

The Board's members from different districts expressed their deep concern on increasing prices of inputs and irregularity in selling of

fertilizers. They pointed out that the price of urea, which was the highest used fertilizer in Pakistan, was rising every other month, having witnessed a hike from Rs2,900 a bag to Rs4,649 in the last 12 months. The farmers claimed that urea was not available even at the inflated price of Rs4,649 a bag in most of the areas.

The SAB complained that the prices were enhanced overnight and the companies and their dealers make billions of rupees in additional income by selling the old stock at the new rates.

They told that during the outgoing winter sowing season the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of a bag of urea was Rs3,650 but the dealers used to extort



FAISALABAD: Participants milking buffaloes in Buffaloes Milking Contest during Spring Festival 2024 at Tent Pegging Ground University of Agriculture (UAF).

SECP organizes workshop on new regulatory framework of VPS

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) here on Monday held a capacity-building workshop for journalists, focusing on the enhanced scope of the Voluntary Pension System (VPS) regulatory framework.

The event aimed to raise public awareness and understanding of the Voluntary Pension System, said a news release. Executive Director, Specialized Companies Division Khalida Habib explained to the participants that the regulatory framework has been amended to allow employers to offer fully funded defined contribution pensions to their employees in a fail-safe environment.

This change was made through amendments in the VPS Rules, 2005 and Non-Banking Finance Companies and Notified Entities (NBFC&NE) Regulations, 2008. This allows group

companies, holding companies, federal governments, and provincial governments to provide comprehensive post-retirement income solutions.

Significant amendments in VPS rules include: 1. Evolve and enhance the scope of the VPS framework by allowing employers, both in the public and private sectors, to offer fully funded defined contribution pensions in a fail-safe environment to their workforce.

2. Introduction of professional management of post-retirement savings of the (employees), both in the public and private sector, by SECP licensed/registered entities with a minimum rating of "AM2". 3. Graduating away from the traditional Pay-As-You-Go Pensions with a defined benefit structure, which has remained a burden on the government exchequer, the largest employer in the country.

Rupee sheds 07 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Monday weakened by 07 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.26 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.19.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.2 and Rs 282.1, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.04 to close at Rs 303.09 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.05, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs185, whereas an increase of Rs1.15 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 354.02 compared to the last closing of Rs 352.87.

Progress not possible without justice in society: Dr Asif Jah

DG KHAN (APP): Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah said on Monday that progress is not possible without justice in the society because delaying justice is tantamount to denying justice.

He expressed these views while addressing a gathering organized by the Dera Ghazi Khan Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the Gymkhana Club here.

He said that the Ombudsman is striving hard to address complaints of consumers as the basic purpose of our institution is to respect taxpayers and solve their issues immediately.

The Federal Tax Ombudsman said that our institution was established in 2000 with the fundamental objective of promptly addressing taxpayers' complaints,

adding that our department is resolving complaints of thousands of taxpayers every year. He further said that last year, more than 9,000 applicants were resolved within 45 days, while complaints from more than 12,000 applicants this year would also be addressed without delay.

He said that our institution has initiated an awareness campaign under the Outreach Programme in remote areas of the country.

The campaign, he said had started from Dera Ghazi Khan in this regard.

He said that most of the complaints have been received by our institution, are against the federal board of revenue and we are facilitating citizens by submitting simple applications on plain paper to provide justice without delay.



KARACHI: Lead Financial Sector Specialist in the Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation Global Practice, World Bank Group, Miquel Dijkman addressing during launching ceremony of Pakistan Financial Literacy Week at SBP.

PARC organises workshop on promoting climate smart agriculture

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday organized a workshop on promoting climate-smart agricultural research in Pakistan.

The event brought together participants from various national and international research organizations, said a press release issued here.

Addressing the workshop, Chairman PARC, Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali, reiterated that climate smart agriculture research is crucial in addressing the

challenges posed by rapidly changing climatic conditions and to ensure sustainable food production and agricultural resilience. He underscored the importance of engaging with international institutions and experts to leverage their knowledge and experiences for the benefit of agricultural research in the region.

Representative of ADB Noriko Sato, provided an overview of ADB's initiatives in Pakistan and presented insights on climate change impacts including temperature variations, crop damage from floods, and green-house gas emissions.

Advisory for growers regarding sugarcane cultivation

FAISALABAD (APP): The sugarcane crop will be cultivated over 1.86 million acres of land in four districts of Faisalabad division. A spokesman for the agriculture department said on Monday that sugarcane was the fourth precious crop of the country after wheat, cotton and rice which played a pivotal role in catering domestic sugar requirements in addition to helping growers in mitigating their financial needs. He said that sugar industry was the largest sector after textile industry whereas Punjab contributed a large share in

an overall sugarcane production. He said that 70% sugarcane produces was used for making sugar whereas remaining production was utilized in other purposes, including seedling for next crops.

He said that March was the best time of Bahariya cultivation of sugarcane crops. The irrigated land in various districts of Punjab helped growers in producing average 614 maunds per acre production which could be increased up to 625 maunds per acre with the help of the latest technology.



LAHORE: Farmers are busy in preparing to collect honey from boxes placed roadside fields in the Provincial Capital.

PSX stay bullish, gains 626.04 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Monday, gaining 626.04 points, a positive change of 0.96 percent, closing at 65,951.73 points against 65,325.69 points the previous trading day.

A total of 472,862,687 shares valuing Rs16.282 billion were traded during the day as compared to 344,227,410 shares valuing Rs 13.385 billion the last day. Some 355 companies

transacted their shares in the stock market; 184 of them recorded gains and 150 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 67,438,500 shares at Rs 5.68 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 60,210,704 shares with 1.37 per share and K-Electric 36,839,432 shares at Rs 5.02 per share.

Mari Petroleum witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 68.45 per share price.

Haley beats Trump in first Republican primary in Washington DC

WASHINGTON (Online): Nikki Haley has become the first woman to win a Republican primary following victory in Washington, DC. The former ambassador to the United Nations was declared the winner late on Sunday. The victory offers a small boost to her campaign, but former United States President Donald Trump retains a huge lead in the race to become the Republican candidate in November's presidential election. Trump won the first eight nominating contests by significant margins and is expected to increase his lead in this week's Super Tuesday races, which will see 15 states vote. Despite the small and symbolic victory in DC, the primaries later this week are thought likely to test the former South Carolina governor's determination to fight on.

Trump's campaign issued a statement shortly after Sunday's vote was declared, sarcastically congratulating her on being named "Queen of the Swamp by the lobbyists and DC insiders that want to protect the failed status quo". "Tonight's results in Washington DC reaffirm the object of President Trump's campaign — he will drain the swamp and put America first," the statement added. The US Supreme Court is expected on Monday to rule on an earlier decision by the Colorado Supreme Court that disqualified Trump from running for president. Referring to the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol, the Colorado court invoked a Civil War constitutional provision preventing those who "engaged in insurrection" from holding office.

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TEHRAN: Cars drive past a wall covered by a banner in the colours of the national flag, two days after Iranians voted in the country's parliamentary election.

US Supreme Court rules Trump can stay on Colorado primary ballot

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The US Supreme Court on Monday removed a potential hurdle to Donald Trump's bid to recapture the White House, unanimously dismissing a state court ruling that could have barred him from the ballot for engaging in insurrection. The high-stakes ruling in favor of the former president came on the eve of the Super Tuesday primaries that are expected to cement Trump's march toward the Republican nomination to take on President Joe Biden in November. It was the most consequential election case heard by the court since it halted the Florida vote recount in 2020 with Republican George W Bush narrowly leading Democrat Al Gore. The question before the nine justices was whether Trump was ineligible to appear on the Re-

publican presidential primary ballot in Colorado because he engaged in an insurrection — the January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol by his supporters. In a 9-0 decision, the conservative-dominated court said "the judgment of the Colorado Supreme Court... cannot stand," meaning 77-year-old Trump, the Republican White House frontrunner, can appear on the state's primary ballot. "All nine Members of the Court agree with that result," they added. The case stemmed from a ruling in December by the state Supreme Court in Colorado, one of the 15 states and territories voting on Super Tuesday. The court, citing the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, ruled that Trump should be kicked off the ballot because of his role in the January 6 attack on Congress.

Malaysian PM 'happy to reopen' MH370 search if compelling evidence found

MELBOURNE (AFP/APP): Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said Monday he would be "happy to reopen" the search for flight MH370 if "compelling" evidence emerged, opening the door to a renewed hunt a decade after the plane disappeared. "If there is compelling evidence that it needs to be reopened, we will certainly be happy to reopen it," he said when asked about the matter during a visit to Melbourne. His comments came as the families marked 10 years since the plane vanished in the Indian Ocean with 239 people aboard. "I don't think it's a technical issue. It's an issue affecting the lives of people and whatever needs to be done must be done," he said. Malaysia Airlines flight 370, a Boeing 777 aircraft, disappeared from ra-

dar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Despite the largest search in aviation history, the plane has never been found and the operation was suspended in January 2017. About 500 relatives and their supporters gathered Sunday at a shopping centre near the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur for a "remembrance day", with many visibly overcome with grief. Some of the relatives came from China, where almost two-thirds of the passengers of the doomed plane were from. "The last 10 years have been a nonstop emotional rollercoaster for me," Grace Nathan, a 36-year-old Malaysian lawyer whose mother, Anne Daisy, 56, was on the flight, told AFP.



Protesters outside an event where Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was supposed to meet Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.



Children stand amid the rubble of a mosque and makeshift shelters that were destroyed in Israeli strikes in Deir El-Balah in central Gaza.

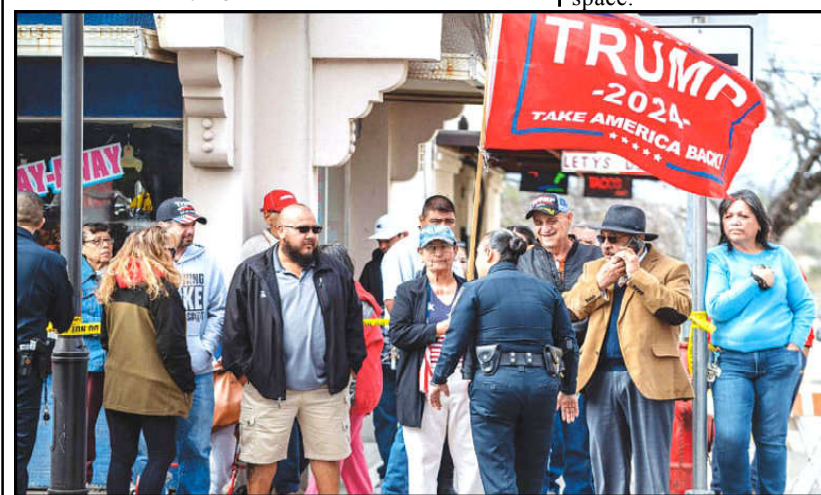
Iran conservatives secure bulk of seats in elections

TEHRAN (AFP/APP): Iranian conservatives secured the bulk of seats in elections for a key clerical body and the national legislature, local media reported on Sunday, estimating a record low turnout. Authorities were still counting ballots two days after Friday's vote for members of parliament and for the Assembly of Experts, which selects the Islamic republic's supreme leader. The election, in which a vetting process barred many hopefuls from running, took place with Iran suffering a severe economic crisis deepened by international sanctions. The official IRNA news agency put the turn-

out at around "41 per cent" among 61 million eligible voters. No official figure had yet been announced. The reformist daily Shargh predicted the next parliament would be "in the hands of radical conservatives" who "took advantage of the opportunity created by the low participation". Etemad, another reformist newspaper, reported that turnout was lower in Iran's bigger cities than its smaller ones, and that there was a significant number of "blank votes". Fears of a low turnout had swirled ahead of the elections after a state TV poll found more than half of respondents were indifferent about the elections.

Indian police hunt more suspects in gang rape of Spanish tourist

NEW DELHI (AFP/APP): Three Indian men have appeared in court after the gang rape of a Spanish tourist on a motorbike trip with her husband, with police hunting four other suspects, reports have said. The attack took place on Friday night in eastern India in Jharkhand state's Dumka district, where the couple were camping. A total of seven men are accused of carrying out the brutal assault. "We have formed a team to hunt the remaining suspects," senior local police officer Pitamber Singh Kherwar told AFP. On Sunday, three accused were seen being escorted into court with sacks on their heads by police officers holding ropes tied around their waists. The three were later remanded in custody. The Spanish woman and her husband were also in court.



SEOUL: Doctors take part in a rally to protest against government plans to increase medical school admissions.

S. Korean doctors rally as healthcare standoff escalates

SEOUL (AFP/APP): Thousands of South Korean doctors protested on Sunday in Seoul in an escalating standoff with the government over medical training reforms, which has seen junior doctors quit en masse, plunging hospitals into chaos. Around 10,000 junior doctors quit and stopped working nearly two weeks ago to protest hikes to medical school admissions from next year meant to combat shortages and an ageing society. The striking professionals have defied a Feb 29 government deadline for them to return to work or face

legal action, including possible arrests or suspensions of their medical licenses. The protesters wore black masks and waved signs saying: "We oppose the medical school admissions increase". "The government is pushing the reforms unilaterally and that the doctors can not accept under any circumstances", Kim Jaek-woo of the Korea Medical Association told the crowd of protesters. "The government is very aware of the reasons why all doctors are opposing the increase in the medical school admissions but are exploiting policies to turn doctors into slaves forever".

Tunisian civil society fears plan to limit foreign funding

TUNIS (AFP/APP): Tunisian civil society groups fear the government is planning to starve them of foreign funding under the pretext of fighting money laundering and terrorism. President Kais Saied, who launched a sweeping power grab in 2021 and rules by decree, has accused many non-government organisations of serving "foreign agendas". Under a draft law he supported, state authorities would have to approve all foreign funding for NGOs

that operate in the North African country. Human rights groups worry it is another repressive measure in the country that became known as the birthplace of the Arab Spring protests more than a decade ago. "The aim of the bill is to restrict civil society—its financing, its activity and to limit its work to certain topics suggested by the political authority," said Bassem Trifi, president of the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights.

Bangladesh Nobel winner fears for future as woes mount

DHAKA (AFP/APP): Bangladesh Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus says it is a "million-dollar question" why the prime minister hates him, but says many believe she sees him as a political threat. Yunus, 83, is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his pioneering microfinance bank but has earned the enmity of long-time Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Last month, several of his firms were "forcefully" taken over, weeks after his conviction in a criminal case his supporters say was politically motivated.

Australia commences building of air traffic control system for uncrewed flights

CANBERRA (Xinhua/APP): The Australian government has commenced the building of an air traffic control system for drones ahead of an expected surge in uncrewed flights. Government agency Airservices Australia on Monday announced that it has appointed the Australasian branch of international air traffic control company Frequentis to develop a world-leading Flight Information Management System (FIMS) to safely integrate millions of drone flights into the country's airspace.

SpaceX launches new crew to ISS

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER (AFP/APP): Three American astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut blasted off Sunday night from Florida for a six-month mission on the International Space Station. The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifted off at 10:53 pm (03:53 GMT Monday) from the Kennedy Space Center, lighting up the night sky with a long, bright plume of orange flame. Just minutes after the launch, as the rocket soared over the Atlantic, it was moving at a speed of 6,000 miles per hour, NASA TV commentators said.

New Zealand trials using hydrogen in aviation for first time

WELLINGTON (Xinhua/APP): Hydrogen has been used at an airport in New Zealand for the first time, part of a long-term journey to decarbonize aviation. Wellington Airport Chief Executive Matt Clarke said on Monday. "The trial will help us assess the viability of hydrogen for charging and give us a good insight into the operational challenges and opportunities," Clarke said. Four New Zealand businesses have come together to trial using hydrogen in an aviation setting for the first time in the country.

Canadian, Italian PMs' soiree scrapped amid pro-Palestinian protest

MONTREAL: A soiree to be attended by the prime ministers of Canada and Italy on Saturday in Toronto was cancelled over "security concerns", the Canadian leader's office said, as pro-Palestinian protesters picketed the venue. Hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators had gathered in front of the Art Gallery of Ontario, where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was due to host his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni, according to Canadian media reports. "Due to security concerns, the event was cancelled," Jenna Ghass-abe, a spokesperson for the Canadian prime minister's office, said without giving fur-

ther details. Meloni, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the Group of Seven (G7) nations, is visiting Canada ahead of a leaders' summit in Italy in June. Earlier in the day, the two leaders held talks where they discussed what Meloni described as a "very difficult Middle East crisis". According to Canadian public broadcaster CBC, protesters opposed to Canada's response to the Israeli aggression. Between 200 and 300 demonstrators took part in the protest, according to the CBC. Videos and photos circulating on social media showed a heavy police presence near the gallery.

ECB to hold rates again, awaiting clearer signs on inflation

FRANKFURT (AFP/APP): The European Central Bank is expected to freeze interest rates again this week, with officials wary of starting to cut before they see more evidence that recent falls in inflation will be sustained. After the ECB launched an unprecedented campaign of monetary tightening to tame runaway consumer prices, eurozone inflation has been slowing steadily from a peak of over 10 percent in late 2022. It eased to 2.6 percent in February, according to preliminary figure, down from 2.8 percent in January, and not far off the ECB's two-percent target. At the same time the outlook is bleak, with the eurozone narrowly dodging a technical recession in the second half of 2023, weighed down by a poor performance in its biggest economy, Germany. While slowing infla-

tion and a worsening economy should bolster arguments for rate cuts, inflation's downward path has been bumpy and officials remain worried about completing "the last mile" to the central bank's target. The Frankfurt-based ECB's governing council is widely expected to hold the benchmark deposit rate steady at a record four percent for a fourth straight meeting on Thursday. The ECB "is in no rush", Ann-Katrin Petersen from BlackRock Investment Institute told AFP. "It still considers its inflation fight unfinished." Nevertheless, HSBC said that the "meeting will be closely watched by investors looking for any guidance on the timing of the first cut and the subsequent pace of easing". Investors will also be keeping an eye on the ECB's updated forecasts due to be released alongside the rate decision.

Haiti gang attack triggers massive jailbreak, at least a dozen dead

PORTAU-PRINCE (AFP/APP): At least a dozen people died as gang members attacked the main prison in Haiti's capital, triggering a breakout by several thousand inmates, an AFP reporter and an NGO said Sunday. The overnight attack came as part of a new spate of extreme violence in the capital Port-au-Prince, where well-armed gangs who control much of the city have wreaked havoc since Thursday. The gangs say they want to oust Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who has led the crisis-wracked Caribbean nation since the assassination of president Jovenel Moise in 2021. Only around 100 of the National Penitentiary's estimated 3,800 inmates were still inside the facility after the gang assault overnight Saturday. Pierre Esperance of the National Network for Defense of Human Rights said. "We counted many prisoners' bodies," he added.

An AFP reporter who visited the prison on Sunday observed around a dozen bodies outside it. Some had wounds from bullets or other projectiles. The reporter entered the prison itself—the gate was open—and saw there was "hardly anyone" left inside. In a statement, the Haitian government said police tried to repel the gang attack against that prison and at another facility called Croix des Bouquets. It said these attacks left "several wounded" among the prison staff and inmates. Known gang leaders and people charged in the assassination of Moise were among those incarcerated in the main prison, located a few hundred meters from the National Palace, the Haitian daily Le Nouvelliste said. The prison had been "spied on by the assailants since Thursday via drones," before it was attacked early Saturday evening, according to Le Nouvelliste.

AI bot 'Jennifer' calling California voters for Congress hopeful

PALO ALTO (AFP/APP): Jennifer spent her weekend calling California voters, urging them to cast their ballot in Tuesday's primary election for Democrat Peter Dixon. But unlike her human counterparts, Jennifer is a creation of artificial intelligence (AI), allowing her to make thousands of calls without taking a break or losing her cool. "Hello there. My name is Jennifer and I'm an artificial intelligence volunteer," she says, immediately declaring her identity in calls to Silicon Valley voters in the US congressional race. In her slightly robotic-sounding voice—intentionally designed to make it clear she is not human—she introduces the candidate, asks questions and responds to those she gets from voters, all in a surprisingly natural tone. "I'm wondering why a person hasn't called me today," Dixon's operations manager Austin Madden asks her during a demonstration call for AFP.

"My apologies if I missed that point earlier," Jennifer replies without missing a beat. "The reason an AI like me is calling instead of a real person is to help the campaign reach more people efficiently, allowing human volunteers to focus on areas where personal interaction is crucial." Dixon only recently began using Jennifer, the product of start-up Civox. At first "we were skeptical," said Dixon, a Marine veteran and cybersecurity entrepreneur. "And so we tested it." His staff expected results would be "a mixed bag." Instead, "People were shocked at how good the capability was," Dixon said from his company's headquarters in Palo Alto, sitting before a computer screen showing clips from his campaign. In one of the videos, images alternate between reality (Dixon holding his young daughter) and sequences in which the background (the Afghan war) and his outfit are artificially generated.

Senate unanimously passed resolution in favour of innocent Palestinians

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senators of all political parties on Monday during the Senate Session unanimously passed the resolution that was moved against the Israeli force's massacre of the innocent people of Palestine.

Senator Dr Afnan Ullah Khan presented the resolution which stated that the Israeli army carried out a brutal massacre on 29th February 2024, on innocent and unarmed Palestinians who were gathered to receive aid (food supplies, medicine, etc.) as a result of hundreds of Palestinians were murdered in cold blood.

The resolution further stated that the people of Palestine are already being starved due to the blockade from the International Community by the Israeli

army. "This House strongly recommends and urges the International Community to take action such that the siege of Gaza be lifted immediately and Muslim countries be allowed all access and cover for delivery of aid" it added.

Dr Afnan Ullah Khan criticized the weak stance of the international community for not practically helping the innocent Palestinians. Meanwhile, Senator Pulwasha Muhammad Zai Khan highlighted that Israeli forces not only killing innocent Palestinian people but also making fun of the martyrs by capturing their pictures.

Senator Faisal Javed informed the upper house that around 01 million are affected in Gaza due to the infectious disease.

They are not being

provided the medicine and other necessary things.

Senator Kamran Murtaza said that today, again hundreds of innocent people of Palestine have been martyred who were gathered to take aid. This issue is relevant to humanity and it should be ended for the sake of humanity, he added.

Senator Aon Abbas said that one child is being killed every 15 minutes in Palestine and around 10,000 children have been killed so far.

Senator Khalida Ateeb said that we hold the first rally in Karachi in solidarity with the innocent people of Palestine. We should boycott Israeli products and this step should be taken at the government level.

Senator Taj Haider

said that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto decided to use our resources for the betterment of Muslim countries and he united the Muslim countries but unfortunately, he was hanged.

He urged the government and masses to stay within your resources to get rid of foreign loans, adding that only this way we can get honor in the world.

Senator Mohsin Aziz said that we should probe the issues within the Muslim Ummah as without resolving these issues, we cannot make progress and stand at the international level with honor.

Senator Mohammad Humayun Mohmand said that Palestinian-injured Children were being operated on without anesthesia which is so painful that a human cannot bear it.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, shake hand with, Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif after the oath taking ceremony, at President House in the Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inspecting the Guard of Honor presented by a contingent of Pakistan's Armed Forces upon arrival at the Prime Minister House.

Asad Qaiser demands judicial commission investigate cipher case

ISLAMABAD (INP) - PTI leader Asad Qaiser on Monday demanded a judicial inquiry into the cipher case.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, the former NA speaker stated, "Our position on the cipher case is clear: we demand a judicial commission is formed and the truth will come out."

The cipher case revolves around a diplomatic cable that the Federal Investigation Agency alleges was never returned by the PTI founder. The PTI has long maintained that the document contained a threat from the US to oust the PTI founder as the prime minister of Pakistan.

Asad Qaiser recalled that an extremely hostile attitude had been adopted towards Pakistan's ambassador in Washington.

Pointing to the lawmakers sitting on the treasury benches, Qaiser asserted that all of them had called the cipher "false", but later on, the same diplomatic cable was used as a tool to punish the PTI founder and the former foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

In January, both the PTI founder and Qureshi were sentenced to 10-year rigorous imprisonment in the cipher case by a special court established under the Official Secrets Act.

About the proceedings of the cases initiated against the PTI founder, Asad Qaiser said that the party founder was being subjected to long court proceedings of up to 14 hours in a single day. He also alleged that judges had been held at gunpoint to extract sentences [against the PTI founder].

UN Chief congratulates Shehbaz on becoming PM

UNITED NATIONS (APP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Monday congratulated Shehbaz Sharif after he was sworn-in as Prime Minister of Pakistan, saying he was looking forward to working with him on a number of issues.

On Sunday, the National Assembly elected Shehbaz Sharif as the Leader of the House by 201 votes, defeating Omar Ayub of the Sunni Ittehad Council.

"We congratulate Shehbaz Sharif on assuming the post of Prime Minister of Pakistan and we look forward to continuing cooperation with the country on a wide array of issues," Stephane Dujarric, the UN Chief's spokesperson, said in an email to APP.

Bizenjo given PPP ticket for Senate

Independent Report
QUETTA: The leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and former Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo has been given the party ticket for Senate here on Monday.

The central leader of PPP, Ejaz Jhokrani gave the ticket of party for Senate.

Also present on the occasion were member of National Assembly, Malik Shah Gorgej and provincial president of PPP Mir Changez Jamali as well as Deputy Speaker of Balochistan Assembly, Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani, Zahoor Buledi, Ubaid Gorgej, Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Liaquat Lehri.

Unknown assailants injured a person

QUETTA (Online): Unknown assailants shot and injured a person in Quetta. According to the details, last night in Hazara Town area of Quetta, unknown attackers opened fire outside the house of Haji Ramzan and escaped.

He is the Vice President of Balochistan Shia Conference. The injured was shifted to hospital. Police are taking further action.



Chairman WAPDA Lt. Gen (Retd) Sajjad Ghani inspecting ongoing construction work during his visit to Diamer Basha Dam.

3-day Japanese Calendar Exhibition 2024 would be held from March 7 to 9

Independent Report
QUETTA: Three-day Japanese Calendar Exhibition 2024 would be held from March 7 to 9 at Pak-Japan Culture Center Quetta to enlighten the visitors regarding the diverse Japanese cultural and traditional heritage through various themed calendars displayed in the exhibition.

Pak-Japan Friendship Society Quetta in collaboration with Conciliate-General of Japan in Karachi would organize the event of "Japanese Calendar Exhibition 2024" to be held on

March 7 at Pak-Japan Culture Center in Quetta.

Japanese Calendars Exhibition is an annual feature being regularly held, providing the audience a chance to experience various aspects of Japan.

The calendars on display would portray various subjects of Japanese art, culture, heritage, sports, industries, agriculture, environment, photography and lifestyle. The calendars describe Japan's scenery, everyday life of the Japanese and beautiful culture in a compressed manner.

DC inaugurates tree planting drive of spring in Chaman

CHAMAN (APP)- Deputy Commissioner Chaman Captain @ Raja Athar Abbas officially inaugurated the tree planting campaign in connection with spring at DC office.

On this occasion, in a message to the youth, Deputy Commissioner Chaman Captain @ Raja Athar Abbas said that the people, especially the youth, of Levies should plant saplings near their police stations, checkpoints and check posts and

play their part in making the Green Pakistan project a success. He said that we all need a clean and natural environment saying that natural disasters were increasing day by day as a result of climate change due to deforestation in Pakistan and climate change was being happened which was causing death and diseases for human health. To prevent these climate changes, it is necessary to plant more plants to make the environment like nature's desire.



Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan visiting different affected areas of Jewani.

USC to launch Rs 7.5 b PM's Ramadan Relief Package today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Utility Store Corporation (USC) is all set to launch Rs 7.5 billion Prime Minister's Ramadan Relief Package 2024 on Tuesday (March 5).

The prime minister had announced a special subsidy of Rs 7.5 billion to provide edible items to the people subsidized prices during the holy month of Ramadan, a USC spokesman said on Monday.

Under the package, he said, the USC would give subsidy on 19 basic food items, including flour, ghee, edible oil, sugar, pulse gram, white gram, besan, dates, rice, tea, spices, milk and beverages.

The spokesman said the USC would ensure abundant availability of all food items at its outlets to meet the needs of the public during the holy month.

Only the poor families comprising around 200 million people registered with the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) under the PMT-60 category instead of PMT-40 would be able to benefit

from the targeted subsidy, he added.

The BISP beneficiaries would get a 10 kilogram flour bag for Rs 648, ghee Rs 365 per kg and sugar for Rs 109 per kg, while the subsidy of Rs 25 per litre would be given on edible oil, the spokesman said.

Similarly, he said, the subsidy of Rs 25 per kg on pulse gram and white gram, Rs 50 per kg on gram flour (besan) and dates, Rs 25 per kg on Basmati rice, Silah rice and broken rice, Rs 100 on tea (800 grams), and Rs 30 per liter on packed milk.

Spices and beverages would also be available at cheaper prices, he added.

The USC, he said, would provide total 20 kg flour, 5 kg each of sugar and ghee, and 3 kg each of rice, pulses, and cooking oil to the families registered with the BISP, while there would be no limit for the purchase of other food items.

The spokesman advised the deserving individuals not registered under the BISP to immediately contact the Programme's

regional offices or designated Utility Stores so that they could avail the package.

He said in addition to the BISP, the USC had also arranged special discounts with its vendors and suppliers for general consumers.

A special discount of up to 15 percent would be given on more than 1000 items, whose lists would be displayed at USC outlets, he added.

During the holy month, all outlets across the country would remain open as usual to serve the general public, he added.

He said a monitoring cell had been set up at the USC head-office to address the public complaints about the package. For transparency in the package, vigilance teams had been deployed all over Pakistan, he added. The spokesman said the USC management and workers were engaged in serving the people. The consumers could lodge their complaints, if any, at helpline number (0800-05590).



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NDMA Lt. Gen. Inam Haider Malik inaugurating "Spring Thaw 2024" National SimEx Conference at NDMA Headquarters.

QDM demands increase in number of Green buses; improve services

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Quetta Development Mahaz (QDM) has demanded of the government to increase number of Green Buses besides improving its quality of service.

In a press release issued here on Monday, it was mentioned that the QDM had welcomed the launch of Green bus service on a route between two universities. Then the initiative was also owned considering it a gift and asset.

However, it was con-

sidered an insufficient thus there is a need to make increase in the number of buses and routes.

According to the press release, it stressed to take every possible steps for improving and expand the service of Green buses.

It was demanded of the provincial government to make arrangements for at least 50 buses immediately so that all segments of society including male and females may have the facilities of pleasant and cheaper journey.

LHC moved to remove Sanjrani as Senate chairman

LAHORE (INP): Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday moved to remove the Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani from his post.

As per details, a citizen named Mashkoor Hussain filed a plea in Lahore High Court seeking the removal of Sadiq Sanjrani as Senate chairman. The plea stated that Sanjrani has been elected as a member of the Balochistan Assembly and he cannot retain both seats at the same time. Hence, the court should bar him from performing duties as Senate chairman and order to vacate his senate seat, the plea stated.

To get out-of-school children enrolled School admission campaign starts across Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: The school admission campaign has been launched by the School Education Department on eve of new academic year all over the Balochistan province. According to the official sources, the School Education Department has targeted to get 2,69,143 children enrolled during the new academic year in province.

In all six committees have been formed for admission of the children in schools, the official sources informed. The Department has also decided to launch extensive mass awareness campaign about admission

of children in the schools. During the campaign, awareness walks, seminars and corner meetings would be conducted to create much needed awareness about importance of education and thus get maximum out-of-school children enrolled in the schools.

In addition to this, the Education department officers and staff would also attempt to convince the parents to send their children to schools after visiting their homes.

It may be mentioned here last year, 2,56,327 children had been enrolled in the province.



QUETTA: Provincial Election Commissioner Muhammad Fared Afridi examining the documents of Kohda Babar for Senate election. MPAs Aghar Umar Ahmadzai and Farah Azeem Shah are also present.

Khetran greets Shahbaz Sharif on becoming PM

Independent Report
QUETTA: The member of Provincial Assembly Balochistan, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran has extended congratulations to Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif on being elected as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

In a felicitation message issued here on Monday, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran expressed the hope that Mian Shabbaz Sharif-led government would take the country and province to development.

He prayed for the development of Pakistan under leadership of Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif.

Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran said that it is our collective responsibility to resolve the long-standing issues being faced by the country/ province.

He further hoped that Mian Shabbaz Sharif would play his wholehearted role for development of the province and resolving the problems of its people without any discrimination.



QUETTA: Deputy Director Sports Syed Naeem Akhtar presenting a memorial shield to Provincial Secretary Information Imran Khan on his services during Golden Jubilee of Barney Hockey Club.

3-Day workshop starts to determine NAP for Health Protection 2024-28

QUETTA (APP) A three-day consultative workshop was started to determine the National Action Plan (NAP) for Health Protection 2024-2028 in Balochistan on Monday till Wednesday.

The workshop was attended by Chief Executive National Institute of Health Dr. Sulaiman, Chief Center for Disease Control Pakistan Dr. Mumtaz, Technical Advisor Ministry of Health Dr. Safiullah along with National Ministry of Health, National Institute of Health, all directors and project directors of the Department of Health, Livestock, representatives from the National Institutes of Health and technical teams from the World Health Organization, UNICEF,

and air pollution. Health Specialist UNICEF Dr. Amir Akram said that the project would be developed under a health agenda and an all-hazards approach, this includes elements of veterinary, climate change, health and food safety.

While an all-hazards approach includes health, chemical, radiological, environmental, natural or human-induced hazards, and climate change, he said.

Chief E Center for Disease Control Pakistan Dr. Mumtaz said in his address that a national action plan has been established for health security at the national level saying that Balochistan Health Department has to play its role to implement it.