

Independent

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PM, newly-pick cabinet members visit GHQ. Civil, Military leadership reiterate commitment to work together for prosperous, secure Pakistan

PM says Pakistan is destined to rise and the role of the Armed Forces in ensuring peaceful rise of Pakistan cannot be over-emphasized

Independent Report
RAWALPINDI: Civil and Military leadership of the country have reiterated the commitment to upholding national interests and working together for a prosperous and secure Pakistan. This was expressed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir during Prime Minister's visit to General Headquarters in Rawalpindi today. He was accompanied by key members of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister was received by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, and was presented guard of honour. Floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada was laid by the Prime Minister, to pay tribute to the martyrs.

During the visit, Prime Minister and Cabinet members engaged in discussions with military leadership on matters of national security, regional stability and military preparedness. They were briefed on the current security environment, threat spectrum, response to the security threats and ongoing counter terrorism operations. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif assured that the Government shall provide all the resources required for ensuring operational readiness of the Armed Forces. The Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet appreciated the professionalism, operational readiness, and sacrifices of Pakistan Army in war

against terrorism. They also commended the dedication of the Pakistan Army in safeguarding the nation's territorial integrity and ensuring peace and stability. The Prime Minister said Pakistan is destined to rise and the role of the Armed Forces in ensuring peaceful rise of Pakistan cannot be over-emphasized. The COAS thanked the Prime Minister for the visit and reposing confidence in the Army. The COAS affirmed that Pakistan Army will continue to measure up to the nation's expectations and will resolutely support the Government in addressing the security challenges facing Pakistan.



LARKANA: President Asif Ali Zardari showering flowers on the grave of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at his mausoleum in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto.

President Zardari's gratitude shows Pak-China ties now at high level: Wang Wenbin

BEIJING (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari's positive statement is commendable and his gratitude to Chinese President Xi Jinping also shows that the relations between Pakistan and China are now at a high level, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Wang Wenbin said on Friday. In his letter, President Zardari thanked Chinese President Xi Jinping for extending warm congratulations on his re-election as the President of Pakistan. President Zardari also expressed his commitment to working closely with the Chinese President to deepen practical cooperation, strengthen the all-weather partnership, and foster a shared community for the benefit of the two countries.

that after President Zardari's election, President Xi Jinping expressed congratulations pointing out that the two countries are good neighbors, friends, partners and brothers. "The ironclad friendship is a historical choice and the treasures for the two peoples," he added. Wang Wenbin said that President Zardari's gratitude also shows that the countries' relations are now at a high level. "We are ready to work with Pakistan to carry forward our traditional friendship and build a China Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era," he added. While replying to President Xi's letter, President Zardari expressed his commitment to working closely with the Chinese President to deepen practical cooperation, strengthen the all-weather partnership, and foster a shared community for the benefit of the two countries.

Second polio case reported from Chaman district

Independent Report
QUETTA: It is no less than a big blow to the anti-polio endeavours in Balochistan as another polio case has been surfaced from the province on Friday, according to the Health Department sources, the new case of polio has been reported from Chaman district. The sources confirmed that the polio virus was detected in a 52-month old child belonging to Chaman. Earlier, polio case was reported from Dera Bugti on Thursday last. Needless

to mention here is that it is first case of polio reported from Chaman and second one from Pakistan. Prior to this, no polio case had been reported during last three years in the province. Meanwhile, after reporting of new polio cases from the province, a special polio immunization campaign has been planned in nine districts of the province. The campaign would be run in Kech, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Hub, Dera Bugti, Sibi, Naseerabad, Usta Muhammad and Jaffarabad.



QUETTA: Security personal stan alert while Muslims offering first Friday prayers during the Muslim's holy month of Ramadan.



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif in a meeting with Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir during his visit to GHQ.

People have been left at the mercy of those waving prohibited arms freely: SC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Friday issued written order regarding hearing on a case pertaining to the license of sub-machine guns and prohibited bores weapons. In response to the question raised by the top court, Mr. Muhammad Saeed, who was then the Deputy Inspector General of Police ('DIG') of the Mardan Region stated "That the document in question (permit) was not issued" by him. It seems that the Province was only interested to save the former DIG but not interested to ascertain who had issued the said document/permit, it said. It said, "The population is left at the mercy of those publicly brandishing SMGs and other prohibited bore weapons and the police, the home departments of the provinces and the Ministry of Interior appear uninterested in keeping the

people safe. In the area of virtually every market, marriage hall, school and even hospital there are SMGs on open display, including pickups with gun-toting men; the police look the other way and do not challenge when they are illegally double-parked. A great sense of insecurity must undoubtedly be felt by the majority of the law-abiding citizens, who are also intimidated by such offensive behaviour. This lawless state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. "We are informed that licenses for prohibited bore weapons are issued 'for the purpose of protection or sports'. With regard to whether any other document or permit allowing possessing and carrying prohibited bore weapons the Ministry of Interior skirts the query; it does not provide an answer", it said.



ISLAMABAD: PTI Secretary General and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub, flanked by his party Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali and senior leader Asad Qaiser talking with mediemen.

Opposition calls out govt's amendments in ordinances without consultation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The opposition on Friday claimed that the government's amendments in various ordinances would cast direct impact on the lives of the people. In a press talk at Parliament's Media Centre, PTI Secretary General and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub, flanked by his party Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali and senior leader Asad Qaiser, criticized the government for carrying out legislation without any consultation with the opposition.

Omar Ayub alleged that no one was given the chance to go through the seven ordinances, which were tabled in the House to seek its consent for their extension. "We have objection to this as the standing committee concerned of the House should have held deliberations on them," he added. Barrister Gohar Ali said legislation was the function of the Parliament, however, the legislators should have been given three days for deliberations on the laws before their passage by the House.

173 nomination papers issued to 78 candidates for 11 seats of Senate from Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: In all 173 nomination papers were issued to some 78 candidates for the elections on 11 seats of Senate from Balochistan, here on Friday. According to the spokesman of Election Commission of Pakistan, the process of receiving and submission of the nomination papers was started on Friday. On the first day, 173 nomination papers have so far been issued to 78 candidates, who approached the Provincial Election Commissioner's office here. However, no nomination paper was submitted by any candidate on first day, the spokesman of ECP informed. Prominent among those collected the nomination papers on first day were included: Pakistan

Peoples Party's Mir Changez Khan Jamali, Sabir Baloch, Mir Naimatullah Zehri, Nawabzada Saifullah Magsi and Rozi Khan Kakar. Similarly, among those collected papers from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz were: Shahzaib Durrani, Aurangzai Khethran and Tariq Hussain. The Balochistan Awami Party's Ejaz Sanjrani, Kohda Babar and Mobin Khilji were also those who collected the nomination papers for Senate elections. National Party's Mir Jan Muhammad Buledi also collected the nomination paper for the Senate elections from Balochistan. The process of collection and submission of nomination papers would remain continued today (Saturday) as well.

FO rejects news regarding visit of IAEA delegation to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has rejected the news circulating on Media regarding the visit of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) delegation to Pakistan. In response to media queries regarding this visit, she said any stories regarding the visit of a high-level IAEA delegation to Pakistan are fake news. She said no official from IAEA is currently visiting Pakistan, nor are any policy talks planned in the near future with IAEA. She further said that Director General IAEA visited Pakistan in February 2023.

Bilawal forms committees to negotiate with political parties for Senate elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has formed committees to negotiate with other political parties for the Senate elections to be held in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on April 2, 2024. According to private TV channel, the four-member committee of Punjab included Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Syed Hasan Murtaza, Nadeem Afzal Chan and Ali Haider Gilani. The channel said PPP committee for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) included Syed Khurshid Shah, Faisal Karim Kundli, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha and Shuja Khan.

EC directs re-polling on 6 polling stations of PB-50

QUETTA (INP): The Election Commission suspended the notification of the victory of the winning candidate from Balochistan Assembly Constituency PB-50 Qila Abdullah and directed re-polling at 6 polling stations. According to the Election Commission, re-polling at 6 polling stations of PB-50 will be held on March 19, 2024 from 8 am to 4 pm. It should be noted that the notification of Zamrik Khan, the successful candidate from PB-50, will remain suspended until the result of re-polling.

Car-bike collision in Hub claims 3 lives

HUB (APP): Three people have been killed due to the fire that erupted after a collision between a car carrying Iranian petrol and a motorcycle near Gadani Mor in Hub, an area of Balochistan in the wee hours of Friday. According to the police, the fire brigade extinguished the fire, but the vehicle and the motorcycle were badly burnt, private news channels reported. The motorcycle was yet not identified, police sources said, adding the rescue teams shifted the bodies to the hospital.

NA passes resolution condemning Israeli war on Palestinians

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Assembly on Friday passed a resolution categorically condemning Israeli war on Palestinians. The resolution moved by Shazia Marri denounced the continued Israeli aggression which has led to the loss of over thirty thousand lives of Palestinians since October last year. The resolution called upon the federal government to play a more proactive role in pushing the international community to enforce a ceasefire in Gaza. The House also offered fataha for the Palestinians martyred in Gaza. Meanwhile, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar laid before the House two bills today. These included: The Civil Courts Amendment Bill, 2024 and the Legal Aid and Justice Authority Amendment Bill, 2024. The chair referred the bills to the standing committees concerned. Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar

also laid before the House seven ordinances. These included: Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation Amendment Ordinance 2023, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation Amendment Ordinance, 2023, Pakistan Postal Services Management Board Amendment Ordinance, 2023, the National Highway Authority Amendment Ordinance 2023, the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance, 2023, the Privatization Commission Amendment Ordinance, 2023 and the Establishment of Telecommunication Appellate Tribunal Ordinance, 2023. The House also passed a resolution moved by the Law Minister extending the period of the ordinances for a further period of one hundred and twenty days. Responding to a calling attention notice moved by Naveed Qamar and others, Minister for Commerce Jamal Kamal Khan said the temporary ban on export of bananas and onions is Ramadan specific.



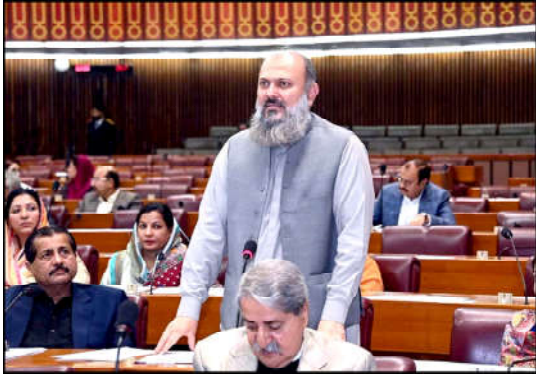
ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaulah Tarar addressing a Press conference.

Handful miscreants bent on sabotaging Pakistan, IMF deal: Attaulah Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar said on Friday said a handful of miscreants associated with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was bent upon sabotaging Pakistan's deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that was crucial for economic stability. "In a bid to disrupt Pakistan's ongoing talks with IMF, some miscreants protested in front of IMF and World Bank offices in United States and indulged in sloganeering against Pakistan Army," he said while addressing a news conference here. The protestors belong-

ing to the PTI were urging the IMF to give funds to Pakistan only if their jailed leader was released, he said, regretting that "activists of an anti-national party" continued to hold sit-in and protest outside the IMF office. "This is a fashionable crowd and these are the enemies of Pakistan who are left with no love for the country," the minister said while paying tributes to the overseas Pakistanis who were sending their hard-earned money to the country by doing white and blue collar jobs abroad. He said these people were protesting to stop

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan addressing the concerns regarding the ban on the export of bananas and onions in National Assembly Session.

NA extends seven ordinances amidst opposition tumult

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Assembly passed a resolution on Friday, amidst ruckus by the opposition, extending seven ordinances for a period of 120 days. The resolution - moved by Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar - received approval under Article 89 of the Constitution. The extended ordinances include the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, the Pakistan Postal Services Management Board (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, the National Highway Authority (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance,

2023, the Privatization Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, and the Establishment of Telecommunication Appellate Tribunal Ordinance, 2023. The resolution brought by Tarar received 130 votes in favour, while sixty-three lawmakers, mainly from the PTI-SIC, opposed it, tearing up copies of the agenda. The opposition labelled the assembly proceedings as "unlawful". Speaking on the floor of the House, PTI leader Omar Ayub stated, "We reject the extension of the ordinances." He criticised the rushed legislation, questioning if it was tantamount to selling off the country. PTI leader Asad Qaiser condemned the hurried introduction of bills and emphasised granting more time to the opposition.

US voices concern over India's citizenship law; UN calls it 'fundamentally discriminatory'

WASHINGTON (APP): Voicing concern over India's controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the United States has said it is monitoring the implementation of this law.

"Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law for all communities are fundamental democratic principles," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said in response to a question from a Pakistani channel reporter at his daily new briefing on Thursday.

"So we are concerned about the notification of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on March 11. We are closely monitoring this act - how this act will be implemented," he added.

The US remarks came at the back of a strong statement by the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, saying the new citizenship law in India was "fundamentally discriminatory" in nature.

The amendment to the Citizenship Act gives priority to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians resident in India before 2014, but excludes Muslims, including minority sects.

"Although India's broader naturalization laws remain in place, these amendments will have a discriminatory effect on people's access to nationality", Jeremy Laurence, a spokesperson with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said on Friday.

India's Parliament passed the controversial law on Wednesday, which has sparked protests and clashes in several locations.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Laurence said it appears to undermine India's commitment to equality before the law, as enshrined in its Constitution.

He added that last December, India joined the international community in endorsing the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, which commits countries to ensure that all measures governing migration are based in human rights.

All migrants, regardless of their migration status, are entitled to respect, protection and fulfillment of their human rights, he said.

Furthermore, while protecting persecuted groups is welcome, the UN human rights office, OHCHR said this should happen through a robust asylum system based on equality and non-discrimination, and which applies to all people regardless of race, religion, national origin or other status.

"We understand the new law will be reviewed by the Supreme Court of India and hope it will consider carefully the compatibility of the law with India's international human rights obligations", Laurence said.



NAWABSHAH: President Asif Ali Zardari offers Fatha on his mother Begam Bilquees Sultana's grave.

Handful miscreants bent

Continued from page 1

funding to the people of Pakistan were wearing costly branded shoes and carrying branded bags.

They only wanted to sabotage the IMF deal because their dream was to make Pakistan default but Inshallah, Pakistan would make progress and the growth rate would increase soon.

The heinous conspiracies of anti-national elements would not have any effect on the IMF deal, the minister said emphatically, adding the imprisoned PTI founder chairman was involved in Tosha Khana fraud, 190 million pound scam and cypher case.

He advised the PTI to approach courts of Pakistan for release of Imran as IMF and World Bank had nothing to do with his cases.

Tarar said that country was stable today with the sacrifices of martyrs, Ghazis and efforts patriotic political leaders.

The Allah Almighty had always protected Pakistan from external and internal threats and the talks with the IMF were going on positively which was also reflected by the trends in stock exchange, he added.

"We have been voted by the people to solve the problems in the country, not to increase them", he maintained.

He said under the vision of the Prime Minister, efforts would be made for making the country prosperous through hard work.

The Prime Minister, he added, had given a comprehensive agenda on economic reforms including restructuring FBR, increasing tax network, reducing government expenditure.

He said since the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took over the power, the economic situation has started improving.

The minister said that the Prime Minister wanted an early solution to the country's problems and he had been pursuing the vision to chart the country on path of progress and prosperity.

He said that international organizations like Bloomberg were hailing the appointment of Muhammad Aurangzeb as the Finance Minister of the country as he had command over economic affairs.

The minister said that unfortunately an anti-national party involved in May 9 incidents was conspiring and working against the interests of Pakistan.

He said that the leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz faced imprisonment due to fake cases but it never compromised on honour and dignity of the country. Tarar urged the youth to side with Pakistan instead of any political party, adding "This is the mission of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and we will be moving forward with the same spirit." To a query, he said the PTI would be requested in the dialogues to refrain from taking any such initiatives that undermined economy or country.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inspecting Guard of Honour during his visit to GHQ. PM also lays Floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada. Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir is also present

Allegations against Donald Lu are false: State Dept spox

WASHINGTON (INP): State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller while briefing the media in Washington on Thursday said that allegations [levelled by former prime minister and PTI chief] against Assistant Secretary Donald Lu are false.

He was replying to a question pertaining to US congressional committee hearing next week on the fairness of Pakistan's elections in which Assistant Secretary Donald Lu has been asked to testify before the committee.

Matthew Miller said: "Any number of State Department officials testify all the time before Congress. We see it as an important part of our jobs to help Congress do its job, both from a policymaking perspective and from an oversight perspective. So we always look forward both to the informal conversations we have with Congress, the formal conversations, and of course the actual testimony that our officials provide."

Replying to another question, Matthew Miller said that we take any threats towards US officials seriously and condemn any effort to threaten the safety and security of our diplomats.

PM calls for united front against Islamophobia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the International Day to Combat Islamophobia served to raise global awareness about the unfounded phobia against Islam and its adherents as well as the need to present a united front to stamp out this contemporary menace.

In a message, on the international day, he said, "Pakistan joins the international community in observing the International Day to Combat Islamophobia."

He said, "This important day comes at a time of alarming surge worldwide in Islamophobia, fuelled by discriminatory laws, populist politics, and xenophobic narratives."

"From ban on public wearing of hijabs to willful desecration of the Holy Quran, and from vilification of revered religious personalities to destruction of holy sites, this dangerous form of religious hatred is infringing upon the basic human rights, dignity and identity of over 1.5 billion Muslims."

"Regrettably, Islamophobic ideologies and policies are being endorsed, promoted and normalized by public office holders, state representatives, academia, and sections of media in many parts of the world, including in our neighbourhood," he said adding, "Online unregulated platforms continue to amplify disinformation against Islam, resulting in real-time acts of discrimination, stigmatization, and violence."

He said the world can ill afford to allow such dangerous growth of hatred, prejudice and bigotry based on religious beliefs, dividing and diminishing us as humanity.

"I, therefore, urge the international community to renew its resolve to foster peaceful coexistence, inter-faith harmony, and mutual respect in the face of this contemporary challenge."

He also called upon the international community to unreservedly speak out and act against the rising tide of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred.

"On its part, Pakistan reaffirms its resolve to work closely with the international community in promoting dialogue, harmony and mutual understanding across religions, faiths, cultures and civilizations," he added.

Bilawal emphasizes importance of int'l Day to Combat Islamophobia

KARACHI (APP): Chairman, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has emphasized the significance of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia as a poignant reminder of the urgent need to raise awareness, foster mutual respect and understanding.

The PPP Chairman, in his message, said that the Islamophobia undermines the very essence of our shared humanity and the principles of tolerance, compassion, and pluralism.

"It is imperative that we confront Islamophobia head-on and work tirelessly to dismantle the stereotypes and misconceptions that perpetuate it," he added.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that Islam, as a religion of moderation and peace, advocates embracing diversity and treating all individuals with dignity and respect, regardless of their faith or background.

He pointed out that since 9/11, there has been a marked escalation in animosity and institutional suspicion directed towards Muslims and Islam worldwide, adding that, despite assertions to the contrary, Islam and Muslims are consistently and unfairly associated with terrorism.

He called upon governments, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and individuals around the world to join hands in this noble endeavor, saying, "We must strive to create inclusive societies where people of all faiths can coexist harmoniously, free from fear and prejudice. Together, let us work towards a world where Islamophobia is eradicated, and where every individual can live with dignity, security, and freedom."

PCB to host tri-series with New Zealand, South Africa after 2 decades in Feb 2025

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday announced that it will host a one-day international (ODI) triangular series with New Zealand and South Africa in February 2025 after a gap of over 20 years.

According to a press release issued today, the development came about in a meeting between PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and his counterparts from South Africa and New Zealand, Lawson Naidoo and Roger Twose, in Dubai.

"The agenda of the meeting included the ODI Tri-series between Pakistan, New Zealand and South Africa, to be held in February 2025 in Pakistan, just before the ICC Champions Trophy," the statement said, adding that the last time the PCB had hosted a tri-series was in October 2004 with Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

"The tri-series was finalised and welcomed by the host and both the member boards."

The PCB chairman also extended an invitation to Twose and Naidoo to visit Pakistan.

Naqvi said the tri-series would be an "exciting event" and thanked the heads of New Zealand and South African cricket for agreeing to participate.

"The PCB is also looking forward to hosting the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 which will be a great pleasure for Pakistan to host the top eight ODI teams on its soil," he said.

New Zealand to tour next month

New Zealand will also be touring Pakistan next month to play a five-match T20 International series in Rawalpindi and Lahore, the PCB had announced on Wednesday.

According to the PCB, the Blackcaps after arriving in the capital city on April 14 will play three T20s at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on April 18, 20 and 21 which will be followed by the last two games on April 25 and 27 at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

All five matches will begin at 7pm Pakistan Standard Time.

Tickets of the series will be available at selected TCS outlets and online at pcb.tcs.com.pk.

New Zealand's upcoming series will mark their third tour to Pakistan in a span of 17 months. They had travelled to Pakistan in December 2022-January 2023 to feature in two Tests and three ODIs. In April 2023, New Zealand travelled to Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi to play 10 white-ball matches against Pakistan.

19-member federal cabinet allotted 1,800cc official vehicles

ISLAMABAD (INP): The 19-member federal cabinet of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was allotted official vehicles on Friday.

According to details, each member of the cabinet has been provided with an 1,800cc vehicle, consistent with their entitlements, in a move aimed at facilitating the operations of the federal cabinet.

The allocation of official vehicles was coordinated by the Cabinet Division, which oversees the distribution of vehicles to the respective ministries of all ministers. Sources indicate that the central carpool of the cabinet now boasts approximately 100 official vehicles, ensuring seamless mobility for cabinet members as they carry out their official duties.

First Pakistani woman awarded the Diana Legacy Award by Prince William

ISLAMABAD (APP): Alizey Khan, founder Ruhl Foundation is the first Pakistani woman to have been awarded the Diana Legacy Award.

She received the award from Prince William at a ceremony held in London on March 14, 2024.

Alizey Khan, 26 has been recognised with the highest accolade a young person can achieve for social action or humanitarian efforts, said a news release.

The legacy awards take place every two years and celebrate the achievements of 20 young leaders from across the world. The Diana Award marks The Diana Award's 25th Anniversary - a charity set up in memory of Diana, the late Princess of Wales and her belief in the power of young people to change the world.

The Award has the support of both her sons, HRH The Prince of Wales and Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex.

The 20 Legacy Award recipients have been chosen by a prestigious independent judging panel, chaired by Baroness Doreen Lawrence, who had the difficult task of selecting just 20 from a pool of exceptional individuals, already recognised for their impact on society with the Diana Award in 2022 or 2023.

Alizey established the Ruhl Foundation to combat food insecurity by delivering ration bags and cooked meals to those in need.

Over the years she has delivered thousands of meals across the country.

She also provides support for weddings and has conducted hygiene drives in underdeveloped areas.

Alizey is also helping to provide education to children of sex workers and is actively involved in fundraising for orphanages in Lahore.

She did extensive work during the COVID-19 pandemic and provided ration bags to flood affectees in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan.

LHC allows markets to remain open till 12 O' clock night , till 1 pm night

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has allowed markets to remain open till 12 O' clock at night during holy month of Ramadan and till one O, clock at night on Saturday and Sunday.

Justice Shahid Karim of LHC issued these orders during hearing of smog case here Friday.

The court sought plan from restaurants about parking.

Member judicial council said parking in restaurants has decreased. Dining halls are very large.

The court took notice of misbehavior of owner of restaurant with judicial commission staff.

The court directed that this owner of the hotel be pointed out forthwith.

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TENDER NOTICE

TSE-232403382743 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The Conservator of Forests, Zhob Civil Division invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2024 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	Improvement of existing Shades and Tunnels	3,163,686

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of at least 2,214,580 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years, showing financial capacity of the firm. **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure **Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed, 2,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 01 April, 2024 during office hours on working days. **Last Date of bid submission:** The Tenders must be submitted latest by 01 April, 2024 till 09:15 AM. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the undersigned at 10:15 AM **Address:** Kakar Colony Setellite Town Quetta. Phone no: 0333781654 Email: kakarfaroq7@gmail.com

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TSE-232403382873 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The Conservator of Forests, Zhob Civil Division invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2024 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates. **Tender Fee Rs. 2000/- and bid Security 2%**

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	BOUNDARY WALL AND MAIN GATE	5,323,619/-

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of at least 3,726,533 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years, showing financial capacity of the firm. **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure **Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed, 2,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 01 April, 2024 during office hours on working days. **Last Date of bid submission:** The Tenders must be submitted latest by 01 April, 2024 till 10:30 AM. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the undersigned at 11:30 AM **Address:** Kakar Colony Setellite Town Quetta. Phone no: 0333781654 Email: kakarfaroq7@gmail.com

**CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS
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AUCTION NOTICE

OLD BUILDING MATERIAL

The Project Director Ziarat Development Package invites participation in auction of following materials based on as it is and where it is.

S.No	Description	Material
1.	Old boundary of orchards at 14-A and 14-B road Widening	Stone Boulders
2.	Old deplorable Quarters	Doors, Windows, Corrugated sheets, roofing and ceiling material
3.	Girls School Boundary wall portion	Doors, old brick masonry, Steel
4.	Box Culvert at 14 B	Scrap Steel

Auction date i.e Bid Submission is at 12: PM on 02-04-2024 and the bid opening will be at **02:00 PM** on the same day in the office of Project Director, Development of Ziarat Town Package, Near Commissioner House Ziarat. For any query contact Mr. Hamayun Khan Kakar Cell No. **03337840788. Terms and Conditions:** 1. All participants should submit bid security of **10% of the bid cost** in the form of a call deposit for each component. 2. The bidders should submit a sealed bid for each component separately. 3. All participants are requested to visit the site. 4. The highest bidder will be awarded the auctioned items. 5. Payment must be made within seven days from the date of the auction. 6. The successful bidder is responsible for the removal of purchased items within 10 days. 7. The Project Director reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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PM kicks off spring plantation drive, vows to save country from climate change risks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday launched the countrywide spring plantation drive by planting a sapling here.

Emphasizing the government's commitment, he announced to double the number of saplings planted in 2024 compared to the previous year's achievement of 240 million.

Speaking on the occasion, he highlighted the urgency to expand Pakistan's forest cover, currently at a mere 5% of the total area, to mitigate climate risks.

Quoting the Global Climate Risk Index, he underscored Pakistan's ranking as the 5th most vulnerable country to climate-related hazards, he stressed the necessity for immediate action.

"From 1999 to 2018, the country had to face the loss of 10,000 precious lives besides billions of dol-

lars of financial loss; therefore it is crucial to create awareness about the climate change risks at all levels including educational institutions," the prime minister remarked.

He directed the authorities concerned to make all possible efforts to spread this plantation drive to every corner to make Pakistan a green and pollution-free country.

He also asked all Pakistani citizens to help the government by fully participating in the plantation drive to save the country from climate change disasters and provide a healthy environment. On the occasion, the prime minister was also briefed about the area-wise plantation targets across the country.

He was informed that during the spring plantation 2024, a total of 54.38 saplings would be planted across the country out of

which 14.1 million saplings would be planted in Punjab, 11.72 million in Sindh, 5.71 million in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 3 million in Balochistan, 11.85 million in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), and 8 million saplings would be planted in Gilgit Baltistan.

While during the Monsoon 2023 drive, a total of 49.02 saplings were planted across the country out of which 14.62 million saplings were planted in Punjab, 19 million in Sindh, 10.68 million in KP, 1.06 in Balochistan, 3.3 million in AJ&K and 0.36 million saplings were planted in GB. The major species to be planted in the spring drive include Timar, Kikar, Jand, Amaltas, Shisham, Sukh Chain, Simal, Farash, Phulai, Chir, Kail, Deodar, Peepal, Neem, Drekh, Beri, Imli, Jaman, Chiloza, Willow, Ailanthus, Sirus, and Poplar.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif plants a sapling to launch the Spring Tree Plantation Campaign 2024 in the federal capital.

CDWP approved 2 development projects worth Rs 7.87 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) meeting presided over by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan on Friday approved 2 development projects with a cost of Rs 7.87 billion after the detail discussion.

Additional Secretary Planning, Members Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives (MoPD&SI), senior officials from Federal Ministries and Divisions participated in the meeting.

The representatives of Provincial P&D Departments and Special Areas also attended the meeting through video link, said a

press release issued here.

Projects related to Energy, Physical Planning & Housing sectors were considered in the meeting.

A project related to Energy sector namely "Construction of 220kV Transmission Line (28km) along with 2nd Circuit Stringing of 132kV Transmission Line from Jiwani to Gwadar (94km) Revised" worth Rs 4540.010 million approved by the forum. The project is proposed to be financed through PSDP.

Main objective of the power sector is to provide uninterrupted power supply to the consumers of all categories and to improve the commercial viability of the power sector as a whole.

QESCO vision is to

provide and maintain fault free high voltage system with minimum possible losses and expenditure. The proposed project involves the construction of the Grid Stations.

The proposed scope of associated work is 132kV (AIS) grid station Jiwani. 1 x 132 kV Line Bay facing Jiwani - Gwadar Circuit. 132kV (AIS) grid station Gwadar (old) 1 x 132 kV Line Bay facing Gwadar (old) - Jiwani Circuit. Transmission Line: 1. 220/132kV Transmission Line from GABD to Jiwani (zero Point) (30 KM) (NTDC Portion) Construction of 2nd Circuit Stringing of existing 132 kV SDT Jiwani - Gwadar (old) Transmission Line (94KM) (QESCO Portion).

AJK President calls EU to play role for solution of Kashmir issue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, President of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) has called upon the European Union's role to help resolve the longstanding Kashmir issue.

"European Union can play an important role as a mediator between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue for the sake of peace and security in the South Asian region", AJK President said while talking to the European Union Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka and Political Consul Rukiye Komurcu, who called on him at Jammu Kashmir House here, said a press release.

He said that the long-standing dispute posed a serious threat to peace and security in South Asia. Stressing the need for early settlement of the dispute, Barrister Sultan said that the Kashmir conflict could

lead to a nuclear war between the two nuclear powers, Pakistan and India. "Any mishap, no matter how small or big, can be a precursor to a nuclear war between the two nuclear neighbors," the president said. Talking on volatile situation prevailing in the region, the AJK President said that the European Union should appoint its special representative on Kashmir to help resolve the Kashmir issue amicably.

Meanwhile, AJK President Barrister Sultan Mahmood will begin state-wide mass public-liaison drive from Mirpur tomorrow (March 16). A statement issued here revealed that AJK President, as part of the drive, is scheduled to attend and address an Iftar dinner to be hosted by civil society in his honor at the Qaid-e-Azam International Sports Stadium in his native Mirpur city on Saturday.

CDA chief suspends 18 employees over Rs 7 bln corruption scandal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) continues its inquiry into alleged corruption within the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) Land Department, prompting the suspension of 18 officers and employees by the CDA Chairman.

A confidential notification from the Deputy Director of CDA disclosed that the suspended individuals comprise an Assistant Accounts Officer, Senior Accountant, Deputy Collector, and four

Patwaris. Additionally, two Assistants, seven Junior Assistants, and a Record Keeper from the Deputy Commissioner's office are also among those suspended, citing violations of the CDA Employees Regulation 1992. CDA officials attribute the suspensions to the ongoing FIA inquiry, which stems from a fraudulent last year, valued at approximately Rs 6.9 billion. In response, CDA Chairman Capt. (Retd.) Anwar-ul-Haq initiated an internal investigation.

IIUI president end Rs 5,000 Aitekaf fee at Faisal Masjid

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President of International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Prof. Dr. Hathal Homoud Al-Otaibi, has taken cognizance of the Rs. 5,000 registration fee for Aitekaf at the Faisal Masjid. According to IIUI Spokesperson Nasir Farid, the president has instructed the Dawah Academy to immediately revoke the fixed registration fee for Aitekaf. Furthermore, the president has mandated that any matters concerning the Faisal Masjid.



Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal chairing a meeting with the VC PIDE Dr. Nadeem Haque and discussed the current economics situation and way forward.

Azam Tarar urges opposition to play constructive role

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar urged the opposition on Friday to play a constructive role in the betterment of the country.

Speaking on the floor of the House, he defended the introduction of ordinances in the house and said that all these would be discussed in the committees.

He asked the opposition party to provide its input in the meetings.

Tarar criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

(PTI) for opposing the ordinance, stating, "The country will not progress like this. You should engage in some soul-searching; writing letters to the IMF and EU will not yield any positive results."

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had issued directives to constitute National Assembly Committees regardless of the number of seats parties held in the parliament.

"The moment these ordinances are laid in front of this house, they will be converted into bills.



ISLAMABAD: The CDWP meeting presides over by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan, approves 2 development projects with a cost of Rs.7.87 million after the detail discussion.

Speakers underscore growing Islamophobia in western, non-western parts of world

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers at roundtable on significance of international solidarity to combat Islamophobia underscored the growing trend of hatred towards Muslims in the western and non-western parts of the world urging a major consensus and cooperation to overcome the menace.

To commemorate the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, the Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), hosted a Roundtable Discussion titled, "Importance of Global Solidarity to Combat Islamophobia", bringing to the fore a global dialogue aimed at addressing the prejudices, intolerance, violence and injustices faced by Muslims worldwide, a news release said.

Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Chairman of the Council of the Islamic Ideology (CII),

was chief guest; Ambassadors of Iran and Türkiye and noted academic and senior Foreign Office official joined as panellists.

In her introductory remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director CSP thanked the esteemed panellists and other participants and emphasized the importance of combating Islamophobia in contemporary times, which is marred by multiple global conflicts and issues.

DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcoming remarks, highlighted the journey since the March 2019 Christchurch terrorist attacks in New Zealand, highlighting the pivotal moments and global actions, including Pakistan's leading role in the OIC and the UN General Assembly, culminating in the designation of March 15 as the 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia'.

While tracing the evo-

lution and myriad manifestations of Islamophobia in recent decades, he emphasized that Islamophobia was not just prevalent in some Western countries but in non-Western parts of the world as well, including in Pakistan's neighbourhood where it was growing in the wake of the 'Hindutva' ideology.

Noting that the world was experiencing extreme levels of tumult, he stressed that this was the time to build bridges, not to accentuate religious or cultural fault-lines or create further divisions. People of goodwill in all faiths should come forward and play their part in forging greater mutual respect, understanding, and inter-faith harmony, he concluded.

A special video message by Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hissein Brahim Taha for the occasion was shared.



ISLAMABAD: People perform the first Friday prayer at a mosque during the holy month of Ramadan at G-7.

Grand Mosque bustles with worshippers for first Friday prayer of Ramazan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Grand Mosque in Makkah teemed with worshippers today as they observed the first Friday prayer of Ramazan.

Security and tranquility reigned supreme as the General Authority for the Care of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, along with all departments, worked tirelessly to accommodate the large crowds.

Preparations began at dawn, with authorities meticulously readying courtyards, gates, and corridors to ensure easy movement and facilitate prayers.

The influx of worshippers was evident from the early morning hours, filling the mosque's interior and corridors with the faithful extending their rows to surrounding roads. The third Saudi expansion of the

mosque also witnessed a significant number of worshippers across its three floors, Saudi Press Agency reported. The general authority implemented a comprehensive suite of services to enhance the worshippers' experience. Qurans with numerous translations were readily available for those seeking to recite the Holy Quran. Cleaning efforts were intensified throughout the mosque. Loudspeakers, ventilation systems, and air conditioners functioned flawlessly, ensuring a comfortable environment. Simultaneous translation devices for the Friday sermon were distributed, allowing worshippers from diverse backgrounds to fully grasp the message.

For those with mobility limitations, 5,000 regular and electric carts were readily available.

KSA launches Iftar program in Faisal Masjid

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Saudi Embassy has launched the "Programme of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for Iftar" in Pakistan for the holy month of Ramazan at Faisal Masjid.

The program was launched at the King Faisal Mosque in Islamabad and was attended by Saudi embassy officials and directors of International Islamic University, Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi, other university Officials, and thousands of faithful of twin cities. After this first Iftar in Islamabad, the embassy will continue this program on a daily basis across the country. The initiative by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs of KSA sees similar events organized by its attachés in various nations during Ramazan.

Inspector General of Police GB visits Safe City Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Inspector General of Police (IGP) Gilgit Baltistan Afzal Mehmood Butt on Friday visited Safe City Islamabad. The Capital Police Officer (CPO) Safe City/Traffic gave an overview of the Safe City Islamabad operational duties to the IGP Gilgit Baltistan. At this occasion SSP Safe City was also present, a public relations officer said on Friday.

The IGP Gilgit Baltistan visited the command and control center, data hub unit, modern technology-equipped cameras, and the police operations

TDCP to launch plantation drive at Murree tourist spots

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Tourism Development Corporation Punjab (TDCP) will launch a plantation campaign on March 19 at the tourist spots of Murree with the support of the Forest Department and the district administration.

Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi will inaugurate the plantation drive at Patriata base. All the plants have been donated by a charitable organization, said a press release issued here on Friday. On the occasion, Regional Manager Patriata Chairlift Moazzam Nazir said the sole objective.

AC accepts exemption plea of Hassan, Hussain Nawaz in Panama references

ISLAMABAD (Online): Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad has accepted exemption plea of Hassan Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz sons of former Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif from attendance.

Accountability Court judge Nasir Javaid Rana heard the Avenfield, Al-Azzia and Flagship references on Friday and approved the request of Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Nawaz for their exemption from attendance.

The court has given time to NAB till March 19 for preparation of case and filing record.

Judge Nasir Javed

Rana took up for hearing the acquittal pleas of Hassan Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz in Avenfield, Alazizia and flagship references Friday.

Qazi Misbah advocate appeared on behalf of Hassan and Hussain Nawaz in the court. Rana Irfan representatives of both the accused also appeared in the court. Prosecutor Afzal Qureshi, Sohail Arif and Usman Masood appeared in the court from NAB side.

NAB requested the court to give time for filing record.

The court gave time till March 19 to NAB to file the record.

HEC stresses awareness about prevention of blasphemous activities on social media

ISLAMABAD (APP): Every individual segment of society has the responsibility to play its role in prevention of uploading, sharing, and engaging with blasphemous activities on social media, said Chairman, Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed here on Friday.

He was addressing the Awareness Session for Prevention of Blasphemous Material/Activities on Social Media on the occasion of Youm-e-Tahaffuz Namooose-Risalat (PBUH).

Chairman, Legal Commission on Blasphemy

CTD conducted search & combing operation in PS Shahzad Town limits

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Friday conducted a search and combing operation within Shahzad Town police station's jurisdiction.

Following the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the search and combing operations are being conducted in different areas of the city, to ensure the safety and security of the Islamabad citizens, a public relations officer said.

Responding these orders, a search and combing operation was conducted in different areas of Shahzad Town police station by CTD and local police

teams.

During the search and combing operation 81 suspicious persons, 42 houses, 18 motorcycles and 09 vehicles were thoroughly checked, while police teams shifted 03 suspicious person and 01 bike and two 30 bore pistols with ammunition to the police station for further verification purpose.

Senior police officers said that, the purpose of the search and combing operations was to heighten the security in the federal capital. All zonal officers were directed to continue these operations in their respective areas. The citizens are also requested to cooperate with police during the checking.



ISLAMABAD: Director General Special Communication Organization (SCO) Major General Umar Ahmad Shah calls on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people are being serving Iftar dinner during the Holy Fasting Month of Ramzan ul Mubara at G-9

Irsa controversy

On Thursday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif avoided a public showdown with the PPP — a key ally whose support he must retain to keep the minority PML-N government in power — by rescinding the contentious appointment of retired bureaucrat Zafar Mahmood as the new Irsa chairman. However, it remains unclear if he moved with such speed just to appease the PPP, or whether his advisers had realised the ‘illegality’ of one of his administration’s first major acts.

It appears that the appointment was made under a controversial ordinance seeking to restructure Irsa. The ordinance became infructuous as former president Arif Alvi had refused to sign it, as it could have caused friction between the centre and provinces.

The ordinance, prepared by the caretaker government towards the end of its tenure, in breach of its mandate and without consulting the provinces or the CCI, had suggested substantive changes in the ‘federal structure’ of the water regulator, which monitors the distribution of Indus waters among the provinces in accordance with the Water Apportionment Accord, 1991. The ordinance aimed to revise Irsa’s composition, vest its chairman with vast powers, and cut the provinces’ role in its decision-making functions. The chairman was empowered to also review and settle provincial grievances, rendering Irsa members ineffective. Currently, the Irsa chairmanship rotates among the four provincial members, and the authority’s decisions on water issues are made based on majority votes.

Since these proposals allow the PM to exercise a lot of power on Irsa through its chairman and the federal government and effectively have complete control on the authority’s decision-making functions, the ordinance had drawn wide opposition from the Sindh caretaker cabinet and experts. At a time when certain centralist forces are touting the reversal of the landmark 18th Amendment and curtailment of the provincial share of federal taxes under the NFC award as the solution to Pakistan’s economic and political problems, the attempt to ‘centralise’ Irsa and reduce the provincial role in decision-making could exacerbate centre-province and interprovincial disharmony. Besides, the message Islamabad tried to send to the smaller provinces by appointing a strong proponent of Kalabagh as Irsa’s head was unmistakable.

In this context, nobody can fault PPP’s Naveed Qamar for calling out the PM for his “very serious, illegal and unconstitutional” order to, intentionally or unintentionally, attempt to use the infructuous ordinance to “usurp” the rights of the provinces through the appointment of the Irsa chief. “On the very first day, if we start encroaching upon the rights of the provinces, how do we function as a federation?” he asked. While making consequential decisions like this, Mr Sharif should not forget that ill-advised actions can have very serious ramifications for the federation, even if these suit his own party’s politics.



Faisal Bari

The chief minister of Punjab, Ms Maryam Nawaz, has said that Punjabi will be taught across schools in the province. This was announced at the Punjab Culture Day ceremony last week.

It is a welcome announcement. Some 80 million people speak Punjabi in Pakistan and, worldwide, Punjabi speakers number around 110m. Why should the language of so many not be taught in schools? If 80m or so speak the language and are able to express what they need to in Punjabi, why would there be an issue with using Punjabi in schools, and why could it not be a medium of instruction for children whose mother tongue is Punjabi, the language spoken at home?

There is strong evidence that the child’s early education should be in the language that he or she brings to school. This facilitates the child’s mental development, and it makes learning easier and better as well. If children speak Punjabi at home, this should be the medium of instruction in the early years. Once the child has learnt the basics of it, the medium can be shifted to other languages that might have been introduced as subjects early on.

So, teaching in Punjabi in the early years makes sense for large areas in Punjab — just as it makes sense to have Sindhi in early education in Sindh and Pashto in KP, and so on. In fact, around 80 languages are spoken in the country. If there is a significant number of children who speak a particular language in a particular area, it makes sense to use that language in early education to allow the children to become interested in learning.

It is sometimes argued that many of the smaller languages do not boast a lot of books or other written material.

But this is not a substantial objection to the use of these languages. We do not need a lot of written material, as early learning depends (and should depend) far more on auditory learning than on reading and writing. And if some early-years books are needed for children, producing them in a particular language is not too taxing a task.

Teaching in the child’s language will help the child feel more comfortable in school and acquire the basics of the language(s) he or she is being exposed to as well as benefit from the conceptual development that is needed at this stage.

However, I do not think that is what Ms Maryam Nawaz was talking about. I think she was saying that Punjabi would be introduced as another subject in school. The idea is, of course, very welcome, given the poor status Punjabi has as a language in the province and country. Still, it does complicate matters a bit more.

We already have too many subjects and learning objectives for each

subject. Our students and teachers are overburdened as it is. They learn/teach English, Urdu, social studies, mathematics, Islamiat and Quran nazra. And there is a lot within each subject as well. Regarding curricula in South Asia, many experts have commented that we overburden our students and teachers and make the latter race to complete the curricula rather than focus on what students should be learning. Should another subject be added without taking something out? Will students gain from this or feel more encumbered?

Students are already learning at least two languages (Urdu and English) even in the early years. Do we want to add another language as a subject? In some places, students are taught the essentials of Arabic as well. We need to think about cutting back.

Do we have teachers to teach Punjabi as a subject? Do keep in mind that Punjabi as the medium of instruction in the early years is very different from teaching Punjabi as a subject. And the abil-

ity to speak a language is no qualification for being able to teach it too. We do not even have teachers who can properly teach Urdu and English as languages: how are we going to get teachers for Punjabi in approximately 120,000 schools in the province?

We will also need to develop the curriculum and reading material for it. If the chief minister is serious about bringing in Punjabi as a subject, it will require quite a bit of planning. Of course, there is the bigger question: when millions of children are out of school and the quality of education in most schools is poor, should we focus our energies on introducing Punjabi as a subject or on other priorities? From an education perspective, the answer is clear. But from a political and linguistic perspective, the answer might be different.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz’s larger point about the need to revive Punjabi, to restore it to the status that it should have, and the need to preserve Punjabi culture is well taken. But for

the teaching of Punjabi as a subject that is going to be important; using Punjabi (and other home languages) as a medium of instruction in the early years of education might be more important.

Punjabi needs to become the medium of communication and interaction in most areas in Punjab. Once the use of Punjabi becomes ‘normalised’ and the real and perceived ‘stigma’ against using Punjabi is weakened, a revival can take place.

The use of Punjabi as a medium of instruction makes sense from this perspective as well as for improving learning among young children who speak Punjabi at home. Introducing Punjabi as a subject in schools, though perhaps useful, will require significant adjustments that need to be thought through and which require a good implementation plan as well. But the chief minister has made a very important and needed policy statement. Now it remains to be seen what the follow-up is going to be. -- Courtesy Dawn

Punjabi in schools

Strategies for ensuring infection control in arterial line management



By Muhammad Nouman

Arterial lines, crucial for continuous monitoring of blood pressure and facilitating frequent blood sampling, are indispensable in critical care settings. However, their use comes with the risk of infection, which can lead to serious complications for patients. Implementing effective strategies for infection control in arterial line management is essential to mitigate this risk and ensure patient safety.

One of the primary strategies for infection control in arterial line management is strict adherence to aseptic techniques during insertion and maintenance. Healthcare providers must meticulously clean their hands and wear appropriate personal protective equipment before handling arterial lines. Additionally, sterile barriers, such as sterile gloves, gowns, and drapes,

should be utilized to create a sterile field during insertion and whenever accessing the arterial line system.

Proper site selection and preparation are also critical components of infection control in arterial line management. The insertion site should be carefully chosen based on factors such as accessibility, stability, and minimal risk of contamination. Prior to insertion, the skin at the site should be thoroughly cleansed with an antiseptic solution and allowed to dry completely to reduce the risk of introducing pathogens into the bloodstream.

Once the arterial line is in place, ongoing vigilance is necessary to prevent infection. Regular assessment of the insertion site for signs of inflammation, tenderness, or purulent drainage can help identify early indications of infection. In addition, arterial line dressings should be changed according to facility protocols using sterile technique to minimize the risk of contamination.

Routine flushing and maintenance of arterial lines are essential for preventing occlusion and infection. Saline or heparin solutions should be used to flush arterial lines regularly to keep them patent

Prioritizing patient safety: The imperative of infection control measures in regional anesthesia



By Muhammad Tayyeb

Prioritizing Patient Safety: The Imperative of Infection Control Measures in Regional Anesthesia

In the realm of modern medicine, where advancements are constantly pushing the boundaries of what is possible, one fundamental principle remains steadfast: patient safety. Nowhere is this commitment more critical than in the field of anesthesia, where meticulous attention to infection control measures is paramount to ensuring positive outcomes for patients undergoing regional anesthesia procedures. Regional anesthesia techniques, offering significant benefits such as targeted pain relief and reduced reliance on systemic medications. However, these pro-

cedures also present inherent risks, including the potential for infection transmission if proper infection control measures are not rigorously followed.

First and foremost among these measures is the adherence to strict aseptic technique. Anesthetists must maintain a sterile environment throughout the procedure, from proper skin preparation to the use of sterile gloves, drapes, and equipment. Any deviation from this standard increases the risk of introducing pathogens into the patient’s body, potentially leading to surgical site infections or other healthcare-associated infections. Moreover, proper hand hygiene cannot be overstated in its importance. Healthcare providers must diligently wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers before and after patient contact, minimizing the risk of cross-contamination. This simple yet effective practice is a cornerstone of infection prevention in any healthcare setting.

Furthermore, thorough environmental clean-

ing and disinfection are essential components of infection control in regional anesthesia. Regular cleaning of anesthesia equipment, surfaces, and operating room environments helps mitigate the risk of infection transmission between patients and healthcare personnel. It is also imperative to recognize the role of patient education in infection prevention. Patients should be informed about the signs and symptoms of infection and instructed on proper wound care and hygiene following regional anesthesia procedures. Empowering patients to take an active role in their own care enhances overall infection control efforts and contributes to improved outcomes. While the implementation of these infection control measures requires diligence and commitment, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. By prioritizing patient safety and adhering to established protocols and guidelines, anesthesia providers can mitigate the risk of infections and ensure the delivery of high-quality care.

TikTok wars



Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

Long before Pakistan’s latest hybrid regime imposed its unannounced ban on the social media site X, TikTok was shut down four times between 2020-21. YouTube was also temporarily banned by Pakistani authorities in the recent past. But the TikTok story takes us far beyond our own uniquely militarized context.

Earlier this week, 81 per cent of members in the US House of Representatives voted in favour of a bill to ban TikTok. The only way the fastest-growing social media app amongst the young can avoid being kicked out of the US market is for its parent company, ByteDance, to divest entirely within six months. The layperson has been led to believe that China owns — and hence controls — ByteDance. In fact, like most contemporary tech companies, it is mostly financed by global investors.

The bill still has to be cleared by the US Senate before going to the White House, but the fact that it has been floated shows how the contradictions of a complex global political economy have become acute and will likely intensify. On the one hand is the fact that capitalism is a fully globalised economic system in which China and many other non-Western economies are major players due to the outsourcing of the manufacturing industry from Western countries after the end of the Cold War. On the other hand is the increasing insularity of

politics in the face of fallouts due to the unfettered globalisation of capital.

The far right in Western countries grew out of the global financial crisis of 2007-9. But today, it is a supposedly ‘liberal’ Democratic president in the US that is ratcheting up geopolitical tensions between the pre-eminent global superpower and its emerging rival, China.

Cutting-edge digital technology embodies these contradictions. The world’s most profitable tech companies include Google, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Nvidia and Meta. All of them are headquartered in Silicon Valley and can, on the surface, be considered ‘American’ companies. But to take just one example: Apple’s most well-known and marketable commodity, the iPhone, is largely manufactured in China by an outsourcing company named FoxConn. While there have been attempts to shift some production to India after Covid, the vast majority continue to be manufactured in China.

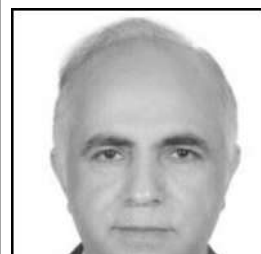
At an even more molecular level, China is the world’s biggest market for semiconductor chips — the single most important intermediate good in the manufacturing of electronic devices. The US is highly reliant on Chinese companies for materials that are vital for semiconductor production, like gallium and germanium. Long before the prospective TikTok ban, the Biden administration articulated its plans to roll back China’s growing influence by announcing trade bans which equate to ‘choke points’ in the semiconductor supply chain. But the problem is that globalised supply chains supersede any particular ‘national interest’. For most of the modern era, Western dominance has been sustained despite contradictions generated by the interests of Western traders, merchants

and manufacturers to seek profit across the world on the one hand, and the imperatives of empire-building in the name of individual nations — whether Dutch, British, French or American — on the other hand. But in our hyper-digitalised, globalised present, contradictions are of a different magnitude.

Where does that leave the mass of the world’s people? First of all, we must avoid the binary that technology companies and their social media platforms are harbingers of democracy while the state — whether US, Pakistani or another — is exclusively the bad guy. Most tech companies facilitate states when the latter impose censorship and demand access to our data for surveillance purposes. Tech companies also use data to make us into dumbed-down consumers — this ‘platform capitalism’ has earned these companies trillions, turning them into the most profitable businesses in history.

Yes, it is essential that we fight for the freedom to use social media apps for anti-establishment causes. We must resist the ban on X, which is all about suppressing disclosures against post-poll rigging and repression in Pakistan. We must defend TikTok’s mostly unfiltered algorithm, which has allowed the most pro-Palestinian content since Oct 7, 2023. In a similar vein, we must not be drawn into geopolitical wars such as that which Washington is propagating against China. But there are also other wars — class, ethno-national, patriarchal, ecological — in which the mass of the world’s people are pitted against both capitalist technology firms and the coercive surveillance state. These are the wars which will ultimately determine our collective fate. It is this long-term horizon which must guide our battle of ideas on social media. -- Courtesy Dawn

Words vs works



Jan-e-Alam Khaki

Muslim-majority societies in general, and South Asian Muslim societies in particular, face numerous conflicting issues with regard to everyday life. These admittedly are very complex problems, which do not lend themselves to easy solutions. This article will focus on what the writer thinks is a major issue and its possible solutions. This issue may be seen as the vast difference between the words we profess (ideals), and the works or actions we demonstrate (realities) in daily life.

Muslim-majority societies are quite proud of having a great religion, great people, a great culture, a great ethical system, etc. Indeed, we may be great in many ways, as we claim. Nonetheless, what needs to be noted is that a nation or a community becomes great not necessarily by claiming greatness, but through evidence on the ground. No society is perfect; that is given. But what is not a given is the huge difference between our words and actions.

In so many surveys, we always stand near the bottom — whether it is corruption, security of life, respect for human rights, or religious freedom. Despite our claims to greatness, in our daily lives — on the streets, in our offices — we tend to show less than ideal conduct. Look at the way the public has encroached on the roads, public thoroughfares, markets, shopping plazas. The most agonising indiscipline is

seen on the roads everywhere — in both rural and urban settings. Breaking basic traffic laws and discipline is seen as a mark of pride, though all suffer.

We are indeed very good at upholding and observing our religious or cultural practices, which include rituals, customs and attire that are supposed to show our religiosity. We are good even in almsgiving and philanthropy, but in practice, we tend to lack in ethical values, care and concern for the larger society, as required by our faith. Generally, I think a great many of us do not even think about these issues. Often, people say it is the rulers (only) who are corrupt, completely ignoring the fact that we — as common people — waste no time in making unethical choices.

Moreover, I wonder where our leaders come from; do they fall from some other world, or do they rise from amongst us? Blaming our politicians, or bureaucracy, does not absolve us from the way we treat our society. Rich or poor, low or high, illiterate or educated, all seem to contribute to this mess. A beggar who does not need to beg but still does so is a corrupt human; a wealthy person feeding the cycle of corruption is corrupt; a blogger who disseminates fake news is corrupt.

If one moves through small or big bazaars, or tries to drive on the roads, one is amazed as to who is really corrupt! Wherever we — the common folk — can, we usurp the rights of others with impunity, and then blame the police or politicians. Not that they are angels, but perhaps we all compete in this corruption.

I think one particular issue plaguing society is the habit of showing off via actions that are symbols of piety, but that

lack the spirit that qualifies one as a decent human being. The double standard is reflected well through recent stories of corruption and moral degradation even by those who belt out slogans of justice. It was their actions that betrayed them. Why, one wonders, is there so much gap between words and works, even by those who profess godly attributes, yet resist them so easily?

We need to undertake a rigorous scrutiny of our lives to understand which aspects require serious attention. It is clear that we need to pay attention to our act-i-o-n-s, not so much to our slogans. Self-critique should lead us to focus more on good conduct, proving that actions speak louder than words.

In Islamic ethics, the contradiction between belief and action is called hypocrisy (*munafiqat*) — an act condemned in strong words. The Quran emphasises competing in good acts (*fastabiqul khayrat*), because “... the goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute” (5:48). Rather than focusing on who is right we need to focus on what is right (action). Sometimes, people take refuge behind their religious garb to do all sorts of unethical things. This has led to tarnishing the name of religion.

No doubt there are countless very good people as well, doing marvellous things for society in their personal and professional capacity. There are people who always think of doing something good for others and society as a whole. There is no dearth of such people.

Let us, therefore, try to do what we can to better this society a little better with each passing day. -- Courtesy Dawn

ADB delegation calls on KP CM, discusses mutual cooperation

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Asian Development Bank (ADB) called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur at Pakhtunkhwa House, Islamabad and discussed with him matters related to mutual cooperation with special focus on development projects of public welfare being carried out in the province with the financial assistance of the bank, said an official press release issued here on Friday.

Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub was also present on the occasion. Talking on this occasion, the Chief Minister termed the Asian Development Bank as an important development partner of the provincial government and said that his government wanted to continue this partnership in a more integrated and effective manner.

He added that work on a number of development projects with the financial assistance of Asian Development Bank was in progress. However, the chief minister said that incumbent provincial government also wanted to further enhance and extend this mutual cooperation and partnership to different sectors including water supply, solar energy, flood protection, solid waste management, urban transport, agriculture, livestock, food security and other sectors of social services. "We expect special cooperation from our development partner for the development of newly merged districts and other backward areas of the province," he said and added that providing employment opportunities to the people and promoting self-employment among our talented youth are the priority areas of his government. Apart from this, he said the government also plans to initiate a program for renovation of all major cities in the province. He further stated that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project assisted by ADB was an important project of the provincial government; we need special cooperation for implementing Phase-II of this project as well. "The provincial government has a lot to do in different sectors specially in tourism, health, education, PHE and others," he remarked and said that the government would like to work in a partnership with ADB for providing basic facilities in the sectors of social services.



NAWABSHAH: President Asif Ali Zardari offers Fatcha on his father Hakim Ali Zardari's grave.

Maryam discusses proposal to issue of Kissan card

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz presided over a special meeting in which matters pertaining to wheat were reviewed. A proposal for issuance of Kissan card was reviewed in the meeting. The CM said that the Punjab government stands with the farming community and it would not leave them alone. Maryam ordered to undertake all possible steps for assistance of wheat cultivators, adding that PML-N's manifesto outlines to ensure well-being of the farmers. She said, "We are also well aware of problems being faced by the common man and we striving to provide them with subsidised flour." It was informed during the briefing that the government had to bear circular debt to the tune of Rs 630 billion for granting subsidy on wheat. The government had to pay Rs 80 billion markup per annum on the circular debt. The Punjab government paid off Rs 469 billion debt in the last eight months.

A proposal with regard to the Social Protection and Targeted Subsidy was reviewed during the meeting. A proposal for uninterrupted provision of manure and pesticides to farmers was also mulled over. Provincial ministers Bilal Yasin, Azma Bukhari, Ashiq Kirmani, former senator Pervez Rasheed.

Governor hosts ceremony for gold medalist students of Khyber Girls Medical College

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Friday arranged a ceremony to give cash prizes to the top three gold medalists of Khyber Girls Medical College (KGMC). The ceremony was also attended by Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, Vice Dean KGMC, Professor Amir Muhammad, faculty members, students and parents of gold medalist students.

The governor gave cash prizes to three students of KGMC including Tasneem Zehra of Upper Dir who won the gold medal in the session of 2017-18, Mahnosh Saleh winner of the gold medal in a session 2018-19 and Ayesha Iqbal who was on top in 2019-20. Ten students from merged districts including four girl students of Mohmand, two from South Waziristan, and one student each from Khyber, Bajaur, North Waziristan and Frontier Region Peshawar were also given prizes. Cash assistance was also given to forty class IV employees of KGMC. Addressing the ceremony, the governor congratulated students and their parents expressing hope that new doctors would tirelessly work for the betterment of the ailing community with passion and professionalism.

IGP reviews progress of smart surveillance project

Independent Report KARACHI: In a review meeting chaired by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, the progress of the Sindh Smart Surveillance System (S4) project was discussed along with various other matters.

The installation of modern cameras at strategic points within the city is set to be completed by next month, as directed by IGP Sindh, ensuring seamless coordination and support in the process, said the spokesman for Sindh Police on Friday.

Emphasizing the importance of technology, IGP Sindh urged the IT department of Sindh Police to expedite the completion of all aspects of the S4 project. The installation of specialized cameras at key locations across the province is expected to enhance police actions against criminal activities and facilitate the tracking of vehicles entering and exiting cities. During the briefing, it was revealed that modern cameras have already been installed at 18 locations across Sindh, including Karachi, and operational facilities are active at 16 sites in addition to M-9. Furthermore, new cameras will soon be operational at selected locations in other districts of Sindh.



LAHORE: US Consul General, Ms. Kristin K. Hawkins meeting with Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan.

7 dead and 1276 injured in 1195 road traffic crashes in Punjab

Independent Report LAHORE: The Emergency Services Department (ESD) responded to 1195 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. In these RTCs, 7 people died, whereas 1276 were injured. Out of these, 566 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 710 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 700 drivers, 57 underage drivers, 177 pedestrians, and 406 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics show that 232 RTCs were reported in Lahore which affected 251 persons placing the Provincial Capital at top of the list followed by Faisalabad 97 with 105 victims and at third Multan with 76 RTCs and 77 victims. The details further reveal that 1283 victims were affected by road traffic crashes including 1031 males & 252 females, while the age group of the victims shows that 225 were under 18 years of age.

Punjab govt to initiate think tank to boost healthcare systems

Independent Report LAHORE: In a bid to enhance healthcare services across the province, Punjab Minister for Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Khawaja Salman Rafiq has announced the formation of a dedicated think tank. The initiative aims to revamp the health sector, with a focus on flagship programs at various levels of healthcare facilities. The inaugural meeting of the Health Advisory Committee, chaired by the minister alongside Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir, marked a significant step towards this endeavor. Both ministers emphasized the government's commitment to leveraging the expertise of seasoned health professionals for system enhancement. During the meeting, Provincial Minister of Primary and Secondary Health Care Khawaja Imran Nazir expressed gratitude for Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's dedication to improving healthcare.



KARACHI: Devotees prepare meals before breaking fast during the holy month of Ramadan at the Khizra Mosque in Provincial Capital.

Record of cases registered against Imran Riaz, Azam presented in LHC

LAHORE (Online): Record of the cases registered against the journalist Imran Riaz and PTI leader Azam Swati has been presented in Lahore High Court (LHC). The petition regarding provision of details of the cases came up for hearing in LHC Friday. FIA and IG Punjab presented details of cases on the order of court. Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Tariq Bashir submitted the details of the cases from FIA side. According to state counsel one case is registered in cyber crime Lahore against the journalist Imran Riaz, one in City police station Sangla Hill Nankana Sahb and two cases in police station Attock and Sadar police station Chakwal. The other different five cases registered against Imran Riaz have been cancelled. Salma Riaz counsel for Imran Riaz appeared in the court. Advocate Salma Riaz said court should summon report from interior ministry too. The court remarked all the record has come before us. The court wrapped up Imran Riaz petition in the light of reports. The case regarding provision of details of detention and cases registered against PTI leader Azam came up for hearing.

Maryam allows to use her helicopter for emergency shifting of patients

LAHORE (Online): Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Aurangzeb has allowed to use her helicopter for emergency shifting patients from remote areas. An important meeting was held under Maryam Nawaz here Friday. Details briefing was given in air ambulance project in the meeting.

Man awarded 10-year jail for selling prohibited drugs

SARGODHA (APP): Chairman Drug Court Syed Khalid Javed Bukhari decided a drug case on Friday and awarded 10-year jail term to a medical store owner after solid evidence was presented against him about violation of the rules. According to the prosecution, Drug Inspector Sahiwal Fahim Zia had sent a challan in 2017 against medical store owner, Hamza, a resident of Sahiwal, alleging that he was selling prohibited medicines without having any licence. The court, after finding him guilty, awarded him jail term and the police arrested him after his conviction.

Robbers gangs busted, stolen motorcycles recovered

MULTAN (APP): Police claimed to have arrested two gangs involved in motorcycle snatching and recovered Rs 1.5 million stolen motorcycles from their possession. According to spokesperson for police, SHO Sadar Nazakaat along with his team raided and arrested two members of Adnan alias Dani gang including ring leader Adnan and Bilal. Likewise, ring leader of Fida Hussain alias Fida gang named Fida Hussain was arrested by the police. Police have also recovered 14 stolen motorcycles from the arrested suspects. 20 cases were traced from the arrested accused. Further action was being taken by the police against the accused.

KARACHI: Senior Leader of MQM-P Syed Mustafa Kamal visiting Aukhwat Foundation Office.

Punjab govt, UE forge alliance to reform schools

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has decided to collaborate with the University of Education (UE) Lahore, to reform schools across the province. Under the program, a new curriculum will be developed for nutrition programs, machine marking systems, and language learning programs. The decision was taken during a meeting with Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat and Vice Chancellor of the University of Education Prof. Dr. Muhammad Alam Saeed, here on Thursday. Also present on the occasion were former Vice Chancellor of the university Dr. Talat Naseer Pasha, Director Punjab Textbook Board Irtiza Naqvi, Amina Shaikh, Professor Dr. Intizar Butt, Professor Dr. Shehzada Qaiser, and others. During the meeting, a plan of action was prepared to launch the nutrition program and language learning program province-wide under the School Reforms Program.

Minister inaugurates Ramadan Dastarkhwan in Panah Gar Mardan

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru has inaugurated the Ramadan Dastarkhwan at the Panah Gar run by the Social Welfare Department at the District Headquarters Hospital, Mardan. Members of Provincial Assembly, Iftikhar Ali Mashwani, Tufail Anjum, Abdul Salam Afridi, Ehtsham Advocate and Zarshad Khan besides Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, Medical Superintendent of DHQ Hospital Dr. Javed Iqbal also participated in the inauguration ceremony. On this occasion, the minister was informed that a special campaign was going on throughout the province to control prices during Ramadan and a large number of traders and shopkeepers involved in profiteering had been sent to jail during the last three days. He said that during the month of Ramadan, provision of Rs 10,000 per poor family would be started in a few days. The initiative would benefit more than 800,000 families. He said that a vigorous campaign was being conducted against those who create artificial price hikes and illegal profiteers in order to supply food items at reasonable prices to the people across the province.

Five arrested from secret gambling den

KARACHI (APP): The Nazimabad police on Friday apprehended five suspects involved in gambling and recovered cash, phones and other gambling material from their possession. According to SSP Central Zeeshan Shafiq, the Nazimabad police of district Central on a tip off conducted a raid at a secret gambling den located in Kathiawari Muhalla.

Educational standard lags behind in int'l benchmarks

LAHORE (APP): Despite progress in recent years, including increased enrollment rates and infrastructural development, the educational standard still lags behind in international benchmarks. It is the transformational power of education that paves the way for bright future of a country. Pakistan, like many developing nations, faces significant challenges in its education system. In order to transform the educational landscape, Pakistan must adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the multifaceted issues hindering progress. Talking to APP, the Director General of the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), Dr. Shahid Soroya stated that there were various strategies and initiatives aimed at improving educational standards. He said these strategies encompass curriculum reform, teacher training, infrastructure development, technology integration, and community engagement. A critical aspect of improving educational standards is to revisit the curriculum to align it with global best practices and cater to the evolving needs of students, he added. The current curriculum often emphasizes rote memorization over critical thinking and practical skills development. For this purpose, he suggested that the curriculum should be revised to incorporate relevant and contemporary subject matter, including topics related to technology, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, and civic education. Dr. Shahid said that the focus should be shifted from memorization to skills-based learning, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and communication skills among students. Emphasizing the promotion of multidisciplinary learning, he said that encouraging interdisciplinary approaches to education allows students to explore connections between different subjects and apply knowledge in real-world contexts. The DG PIE said that teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education. However, many teachers in Pakistan lack adequate training and support to effectively engage students and deliver high-quality instruction. To address this issue, he said that comprehensive training programs for teachers should be implemented. He said that the development and implementation of comprehensive training programs for teachers, focusing on pedagogical techniques, subject knowledge, classroom management, and the use of technology are needed. Stressing the provision of ongoing support and mentorship for teachers.



GILGIT: A large number of people offering first Congregation Prayer (Friday prayer) of the holy month of Ramadan.

Temporary ban on banana, onion exports implemented for Ramazan: Jam Kamal Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Friday addressed concerns regarding the ban on the export of bananas and onions, clarifying that the restriction is specifically for the duration of Ramazan and is temporary.

The decision to impose the ban was made at the cabinet level following the submission of a summary by the Ministry of National Food Security, and a price escalation predicted by the sensitive price index and export association, said a press release issued here.

This move came in response to a calling attention notice raised by Syed Naveed Qamar and other legislators regarding the impact of the ban on agricultural exports.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan assured the assembly that the ban would remain in effect until the 15th of the following month, highlighting the government's sensitivity to the concerns raised by agriculturists.

The temporary ban on the export of bananas and onions during Ramazan aims to ensure an adequate domestic supply of these essential commodities during the holy month, which would ease common people and does not create a false shortage perception.

The government's decision reflects its commitment to balancing the needs of local consumers with the interests of agricultural producers.

While the ban presents a short-term restriction on export opportunities for farmers, it underscores the government's proactive approach to managing food security during religious observances.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb calls on by Ambassador of the European Union (EU), Dr. Riina Kionka & discussed matters of mutual interest, economic & financial relations between the EU & Pakistan.

Finance minister appripes EU, Ambassador on vital reform priorities of Govt

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday apprised the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Riina Kionka about the important reform priorities of the Government.

The Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan Dr. Riina Kionka called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, said a press release issued here.

The Finance Minister also shared possible areas of mutual collaboration including digitization, export competitiveness, livestock and dairy production.

The Ambassador acknowledged the economic agenda of the Government and assured the Finance Minister of EU's continued support to Pakistan.

The Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan Dr. Riina Kionka called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, at the Finance Division.

Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb welcomed the Ambassador of the EU and appreciated the longstanding bilateral relations and development cooperation between EU and Pakistan.

He thanked the Ambassador for EU's ongoing support in flood-affected areas of Pakistan.

Dr. Riina Kionka congratulated the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue on his recent appointment to office and looked forward to collaborating with the new Government.

Weekly inflation up by 1.35 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 1.35 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 14, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 327.21 points as compared to 322.86 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 32.89 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, increased by 0.91 per cent and went up to 320.06 points from last week's 317.18 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; and above Rs. 44,175, increased by 0.86 percent, 1.25 percent, 1.41 and 1.55 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 18 (35.29%) items increased, 10 (19.61%) items decreased and 23 (45.10%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included cooking oil 5 litre (1.08%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (1.07%), wheat flour (0.95%), sugar (0.64%), gur (0.57%), rice basmati Broken (0.50%), pulse masoor (0.17%) and pulse mash (0.15%).

The items that recorded an increase in their prices included tomatoes (21.96%), bananas (21.76%), eggs (7.15%), onions (5.57%), LPG (4.45%), garlic (3.62%), mutton (1.74%), beef (1.53%), chicken (1.40%), georgette (1.04%), shirting (1.01%) and long cloth (0.94%).

On Year-on-Year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included cooking oil 5 litre (21.33%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (19.12%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (17.89%), mustard oil (15.26%).



ISLAMABAD: CEO Telenor Khurram Ashfaq calls on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

Economy improving, confidence of investors rising: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said that the economic conditions are improving and confidence of investors is rising.

Talking to business community on Friday, he said that the improved situation infuses confidence in the local and foreign investors, while the central bank was also considering some reduction in the interest rate.

Mian Zahid Hussain said the business community wants the Central Bank to slash interest rates by at least four percent.

During the current year, the overall economic conditions were better than last year, he added.

However, it was the new government's responsibility to improve further the conditions, and they will continue to receive the unconditional support of the business community.

The business leader said there was yet to be an immediate solution to Pakistan's economic problems. A long battle will have to be fought for this, which will be a test of the new government and the finance minister, and success will be the only option.

He said promoting investment was needed instead of relying more on loans. He said there was an urgent need to reduce the burden of taxes on the public and the industrial sector and that the tax base needs to be increased.

He said that to increase the tax revenue, it has become necessary to levy tax on wholesale, retail, property, and agricultural income. At the same time, the FBR's system should be modernized to increase its effectiveness and transparency.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the salaries were currently being paid by taking loans, and this situation can only continue.

Minister says: Tharcoal block-I Energy Project likely to create employment openings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Telenor Khurram Ashfaq on Friday called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and discussed issues regarding 5G rollout, innovation and youth development.

The CEO congratulated the minister for assuming the charge, said a news release issued here.

Shaza Fatima Khawaja said that youth were the asset of the country, adding it was vital to equip youth with digital skills.

The government was committed for the development of youth, she added.

Meanwhile, Director General Special Communication Organization (DCO) Major General Umar Ahmad Shah called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

Minister says: Council Sukkur Syed Kamil Hyder Shah and others were also present on the occasion.

The delegation informed the Energy Minister that the Power Generation Company is working on block one of Tharcoal which costs Rs 9 billion, and there is a need to further accelerate the pace of the project.

The delegation said that the chairman and top level management of the company will meet the Chief Minister of Sindh soon.

Tokyo stocks end higher over value stock gains

TOKYO (Xinhua/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Friday as value stocks led the gains despite overnight losses among tech heavyweights on Wall Street. Japan's benchmark Nikkei stock index, the 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average, snapped the three-day losing streak by going up 111.41 points, or 0.29 percent, from Wednesday to close the day at 38,807.38. The broader Topix index, meanwhile, finished 13.08 points, or 0.49 percent, higher at 2,661.59. Market watchers here noted the Nikkei index was supported by resource-related.



KARACHI: Chairman Shanghai Electric Power Meng Donghai meeting with Sindh Minister for Energy Syed Nasir Hussain Shah.

Zong, JS Zindigi sign MOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G Pakistan's leading mobile network operator, and JS Zindigi, a leading digital financial services provider, announced a lucrative partnership to offer Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) within the My Zong App (MZA).

JS Zindigi is a digital financial services provider in Pakistan, offering a comprehensive suite of mobile wallet solutions and digital banking services. Based on a dedicated team empowered by the latest technology, upholding the highest ethical standards seeking to create value for their stakeholders and a responsible contribution to society, said a news release.

This collaboration brings greater financial convenience to Zong 4G's broad user base. My Zong App users can now open JS Zindigi wallet accounts directly within the app, enabling them to avail a range of JS Zindigi's digital financial services.

This integration will allow users to effortlessly top-up their mobile accounts, settle postpaid bills and to purchase Zong 4G data bundles.

"We are excited to partner with JS Zindigi to integrate their BaaS solutions within the MZA."

Engro fertilizers engages dealers for urea price enforcement

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to support the Government's efforts to ensure urea availability at official prices, Engro Fertilizers has urged its dealers to comply with company guidelines on pricing and strictly ensure product availability to the farmers.

To enforce guidelines of selling Urea at MRP, Engro Fertilizers hosted dealer conferences in Lahore, Multan and Hyderabad, said a news release received here on Friday.

Addressing the event participants, Engro Fertilizers VP Marketing Atif Muhammad Ali commented that "Engro Fertilizers has always adhered to highest standard of integrity and holds the same expectations from its dealers. To support the prosperity of farmers, Engro dealers must ensure urea availability at official prices.

Further, Engro Fertilizers has not increased the selling price of imported urea to facilitate the Government in providing support to farmers."

At the conference, the dealers were also updated on the recent gas price hike and the disparity of gas prices that exists among different fertilizer players.

All Pakistan Fertilizer Dealer Association Parton in Chief Mr. Ghulam Ahmed on behalf of fertilizer dealers shared "It is in the country's wider interest that a uniform gas price should be set for all fertilizer manufacturers.

Agriculture minister visits Crop Reporting Service

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Minister for Agriculture, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sajjad on Friday paid a visit to the Crop Reporting Service (CRS) where he was given a detailed briefing by the Director General CRS on the performance and development projects of the department.

On the occasion DG CRS, Sayyed Altaf Ahmad Shah, Director Muhammad Kaleem, Director Zahid Ullah and Focal Person Jan Alam Khalil and officers were present.

The minister was briefed on scientific crop expense and land requirement estimation system for various crops, vegetables and orchards. Keeping in view this vital information, the provincial government takes important decisions on agricultural import and export, the minister was told. The minister also visited the modern Remote Sensing Lab of the CRS where he was told that through this state-of-the-art system a quick information regarding the crop-covered area could be ascertained and the crops could timely be saved from climate change effects.

Likewise, the minister was told that through this system crop production could also be enhanced.

74 Pakistani companies participated in LEAP

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as 74 Pakistani companies, with 800 delegates, participated in the LEAP 2014 event held in Riyadh.

The Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), in collaboration with P@SHA, represented the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication of Pakistan (MoITT) at LEAP, said a news release received here on Friday.

The Pakistan Pavilion, occupying 162 sqm, was inaugurated by PSEB CEO Ms. Aisha Hamera Moriani, P@SHA Chairman, and Ahmed Farooq, Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

The forum, attended by various Saudi institution officials, focused on SDAIA's upcoming department, SCAI, and their new accelerator, GAIA.

It underscored the importance of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia collaboration and facilitated B2B engagements for potential business opportunities. Several key agreements were inked, including a P@SHA-Bahrain MOU, an equity partnership by SuperNova Solutions, a data management transformation MoU between TenX and Jazz, and an M&A region services MoU between Abacus and ELM.

LESCO collects Rs 9.21m from 379 defaulters in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) recovered more than Rs 9.21 million from 379 chronic defaulters in all its five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - on the 17th day of its recovery campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media on Friday that on the 17th day, SE (Superintending Engineer) Faizan Butt recovered outstanding dues of Rs 1.79 million from 69 defaulters in Northern Circle; SE Umar Bilal recovered Rs 2.81 million from 44 defaulters in Eastern Circle; SE Shabbir recovered Rs 0.96 million from 37 defaulters in Central Circle; SE Zafarullah Saanghi collected Rs 0.48 million from 20 defaulters in South Circle; SE Muhammad Hussain recovered Rs 0.41 million from 23 defaulters in Nankana Circle; SE Najamul Hassan recovered Rs 0.67 million from 24 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle; SE Jamshed Zaman collected Rs 0.64 million from 68 defaulters in Okara Circle and SE Ahmed Shahzad Chughtai recovered Rs 1.45 million from 94 defaulters in Kasur Circle.

During the 177 days, the spokesman added that the LESCO, under the supervision of Director (Customer Services) Rai Muhammad Asghar, has recovered a total of Rs 2.69 billion outstanding dues from 91,926 dead defaulters. He elaborated that uptill now the company has collected Rs 390.99 million from 13,274 defaulters in Northern Circle; Rs 635.45 million from 11,660 defaulters in Eastern Circle; Rs 356.42 million from 10,346 defaulters in Central Circle; Rs 152.06 million from 5,379 defaulters in South Circle; Rs 218.87 million.

Chairman BoD KP Economic Zones visits Mohmand Zone

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairman Board of Directors (BoD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) and Secretary Industries, Commerce and Technical Education (IC&TE) Department Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah along with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Javed Iqbal Khattak, Chief Zone Management (CZM), and Chief Project Planning and Development (CPP&D), visited Mohmand Economic Zone on the other day.

According to a press release issued here on Friday, during the visit, they examined the ongoing infrastructure development projects and also toured the operational industrial units within the zone.

On this occasion, the Secretary Industries emphasized upon the significance of tree plantation in the Industrial Zone.

Similarly, to kick start this initiative, he inaugurated the spring tree plantation drive in the Zone and personally planted a sapling in the zone office.



ISLAMABAD: MNA Anjum Aqeel and President ICCI Ahsan Bakhtawari taking oath from newly elected cabinet members of F-8 Traders Association.

Some 322 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 113 of them recorded gains and 192 sustained losses, whereas the share

Putin asks voters, including in annexed Ukrainian areas, to determine Russia's future

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin appealed to voters, including in annexed parts of Ukraine, to be united in determining Russia's future by casting ballots in this week's presidential election which he is all but certain to win.

"It is vital to underscore our cohesion and resolve and move forward together. Every vote you cast is valued and meaningful," Putin said in a video address first shown in the Russian far east and reported by national news agencies.

"I therefore ask you in the coming three days to

Polls open in Russian vote to extend Putin's reign

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russians started voting on Friday in a three-day presidential election that is set to hand veteran leader Vladimir Putin another six-year term as the raging conflict in Ukraine spreads further into Russian territory.

In power as president or prime minister since the final day of 1999, the former KGB agent is casting the election as a show of Russians' loyalty and support for his military assault on Ukraine, now in its third year.

Polling stations in a country spread over 11 time zones opened at 8am on Friday (8pm GMT Thursday) on the Far Eastern Kamchatka peninsula and will close on Sunday at 8pm (6pm GMT) in Russia's Kaliningrad exclave, wedged between EU members Poland and Lithuania.

exercise your right to vote," Putin, 71 and in power as president or prime minister since 2000, faces three challengers in three days of voting beginning on Friday. None of the challengers has criticised him.

Opinion polls show he is supported by a majority of Russians, with one survey last month giving him 75% support.

Two candidates who had hoped to run on a platform of calling for an end to the war in Ukraine, officially described by Russia as a "special military operation," were ruled ineligible.



A woman votes in Russia's presidential election in the far eastern city of Vladivostok.



PYONGYANG: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the driver's seat of a new main battle tank after a training exercise for tank crews at an undisclosed location.

Hezbollah tells Iran it would fight alone in any war with Israel

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: With ally Hamas under attack in Gaza, the head of Iran's Quds Force visited Beirut in February to discuss the risk posed if Israel next aims at Lebanon's Hezbollah, an offensive that could severely hurt Tehran's main regional partner, seven sources said.

In Beirut, Quds chief Esmail Qaani met Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the sources said, for at least the third time since Hamas'

deadly Oct. 7 attacks on southern Israel and Israel's devastating retaliatory assault on Gaza.

The conversation turned to the possibility of a full Israeli offensive to its north, in Lebanon, the sources said.

As well as damaging the Shi'ite Islamist group, such an escalation could pressure Iran to react more forcefully than it has so far since Oct. 7, three of the sources, Iranians within the inner circle of power, said.

North Korean leader 'drives' new battle tank

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: North Korea leader Kim Jong Un drove a "new-type main battle tank" while overseeing military training exercises, state media said on Thursday, as Seoul and Washington wrap joint drills to improve deterrence.

Wearing a black leather jacket, Kim saluted ranks of camouflage-uniformed troops, and watched live-fire "training march" exercises from a field command post, flanked by top generals, images published by state media showed.

Israel has given no evidence to back accusations against UN agency, says EU

Monitoring Desk
BRUSSELS: The European Union's top humanitarian aid official said on Thursday he had seen no evidence from Israel to back its accusations against staff from the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), which should continue playing a "critical" role in Gaza.

UNRWA, which provides aid and services to Palestinian refugees in Gaza and across the region, has been in crisis since Israel accused a dozen of its staff of involvement in the Oct 7 raid. The allegations prompted UNRWA's biggest donor, the United States, and some others to pause funding, putting the agency's future in doubt.

The head of UNRWA

earlier this month expressed cautious optimism that some donors would soon return, though US officials said Washington's pause in funding might become permanent due to opposition in Congress. The EU's executive commission is a leading UNRWA donor after the United States. It said on March 1 it would pay 50 million euros to the agency, but hold back 32 million euros while it deals with the Israeli allegations. Janecz Lenarcik, the head of humanitarian aid and crisis management at the European Commission, said that neither he nor — according to his knowledge — anybody else at the EU executive, or any other UNRWA donor had been presented.

Two killed in latest Russian drone attack on Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Two people were killed after Russia unleashed its second overnight mass drone attack on Ukraine in two days, authorities in Ukraine said on Friday. Kyiv's air force said all 27 Iranian-made drones had been shot down by air defences over seven regions across the country, including around the capital.

Two people were killed in the central Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia when a residential building was damaged in the strike, according to the regional governor. The air force also said Russian forces had fired eight missiles in eastern and central Ukraine, but offered no further details.

Thousands of farmers gather in Delhi to demand higher crop prices

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: Thousands of farmers rode buses and trains from across India to gather on Thursday at a rally in the capital, pressing a demand for higher guaranteed prices for their crops, as they faced down police barricades and tough security. The rally, days before general elections are expected to be called in an exercise that will see Prime Minister Narendra Modi seek a rare third term, comes a month after police wielding tear gas and water can-

nons halted a farmers' march outside New Delhi.

"Through this meeting, we want to show government authorities that we are not too far from reaching our goals," Darshan Pal, of a farmers' group, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), told news agency ANI. "We can surround Delhi whenever we want." There was no immediate comment from the government or Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) but they have said in the past they are committed to the welfare and prosperity of farmers.

Thai tourist hotspot Chiang Mai tops world's most polluted cities

Monitoring Desk
CHIANG MAI: Thai tourist hotspot Chiang Mai was blanketed by hazy smog Friday, as residents and visitors to the usually picturesque northern city were left wheezing in the toxic air. The city topped air monitoring website IQAir's table of the world's most polluted cities early Friday. Levels of PM2.5 pollutants—causing microparticles small enough to enter the bloodstream through the lungs—were classified as "very unhealthy" and hit more than 35 times the World Health Organization's annual guideline.



Spokesperson for the Bharatiya Kisan Union Rakesh Tikait speaks with farmers during a sit-in at New Delhi's Ramlila ground.

US Senate leader says Netanyahu an obstacle to peace

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called on Thursday for new elections in Israel, harshly criticising Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as an obstacle to peace.

Democrat Schumer, long a supporter of Israel and the highest-ranking US Jewish elected official, told the Senate that Netanyahu's government "no longer fits the needs of Israel" five months into a war.

"As a democracy, Israel has the right to choose its own leaders, and we should let the chips fall where they may. But the important thing is that Israelis are given a choice. There needs to be a fresh

Israeli strikes kill at least 29 Gazans awaiting aid, say Palestinian officials

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: At least 29 Palestinians were killed while awaiting aid in two separate Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, Gaza's health ministry said.

In the first incident, Palestinian health officials said eight people were killed in an airstrike on an aid distribution centre in Al-Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip.

Later, at least 21 people were killed and more than 150 wounded by Israeli gunfire at a crowd awaiting aid trucks at a northern Gaza roundabout, Gaza's health ministry said.

In a statement, Israel's military denied attacking aid centres, describing the reports as "false."

"As the IDF assesses the incident with the thoroughness that it deserves, we urge the media to do the same and only rely on credible information," the statement said.

The Gaza conflict has displaced most of the enclave's 2.3 million population. Chaotic scenes and deadly incidents have taken place during aid distributions as desperately hungry people scrambled for food.

On Feb. 29, Palestinian health authorities said Israeli forces shot dead

more than 100 Palestinians as they waited for an aid delivery near Gaza City. Israel blamed the deaths on crowds that surrounded aid trucks, saying victims had been trampled or run over.

In Deir Al-Balah, also in central Gaza, an Israeli missile hit a house on Thursday, killing nine people, Palestinian medics said.

Residents said Israeli aerial and ground bombardments persisted overnight across the enclave, including in Rafah in the south, where over a million displaced people are sheltering.

The first ship to use a new sea route approaches Gaza with 200 tons of aid

Monitoring Desk
WADI GAZA: A ship carrying 200 tons of aid approached the coast of Gaza on Friday in a mission to inaugurate a sea route from Cyprus to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the enclave five months into the war between Israel and Hamas. The ship, operated by the Spanish aid group Open Arms, left Cyprus on Tuesday towing a barge laden with food sent by World Central Kitchen, the charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés. It could be seen off Gaza's coast Friday morning.

Israel has been under increasing pressure to allow

At least 8 dead after migrant boat sinks off Turkey, state media says

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: At least eight people drowned when a rubber boat carrying migrants sank off Turkey's northwest province of Canakkale, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported on Friday.

US commandos train for the unexpected in North Korea's shadow

Monitoring Desk
GWANGJU: US special operations troops in South Korea are training and preparing for unexpected threats at a time when global crises are more interconnected than ever, their commander said during an exercise this week. "Nothing in the history of the United States should give us any

faith and confidence that we know where the next threat is coming from," Brigadier General Derek Lipson of Special Operations Command - Korea said in an interview on the sidelines of joint drills. Nuclear-armed North Korea in recent years has made unprecedented strides in its weapons programs.

Palestinian leader names adviser Mohammed Mustafa as PM

Monitoring Desk
RAMALLAH: Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has appointed Mohammed Mustafa, a long-trusted adviser on economic affairs, as prime minister, the official Wafa news agency said on Thursday.

Mustafa's appointment comes less than three weeks after his predecessor, Mohammed Shtayeh, resigned, citing the need for change after the Hamas attack of October 7 triggered war with Israel in Gaza.

The 69-year-old now faces the task of forming a new government for the Palestinian Authority, which has limited powers in parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Mustafa, who studied at George Washington University in Washington, is an independent executive committee member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation—dominated by the ruling Fatah movement. He has served as deputy prime minister for economic affairs, held a board seat on the Palestine Investment Fund and worked in a number of senior positions at the World Bank.

He has also advised the Kuwaiti government and the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia, the Public Investment Fund.

Since 2007, control of the Palestinian territories has been divided between Abbas's Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.



Crew members of a rescue ship pick migrants during an operation in the Mediterranean Sea.

Women bus drivers, a first for Uzbekistan

Monitoring Desk
TASHKENT: Saodat SHERMATOVA "cried with joy" after Uzbekistan, a predominantly Muslim former Soviet republic, lifted a ban last month on women working as bus drivers.

"I was waiting a long time," said the 49-year-old, who used to work in public transport maintenance in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent.

Shermatova now drives the number 51, an electric bus, around Tashkent—the biggest city in Central Asia with a population of three million.

She said her husband, also a bus driver, was concerned at first but has given her "full support" although he "tells me every day to be careful".

60 drown in bid to reach Europe from Libya

Monitoring Desk
MARSEILLE: At least 60 people died on a migrant boat that lost power as it tried to reach Europe from Libya, an aid group said on Thursday, citing accounts from those rescued. "Survivors report that at least 60 people died en route, including women and at least one child," said Marseille-based SOS Mediterranee. The group's Ocean Viking rescue ship is currently heading for port, carrying 224 people rescued from different boats.

Among them are 25 from a boat that survivors said had set off from Zawiyah, Libya on March 8

—only for its motor to give out three days later.

UN body the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said it was "deeply troubled by news of a shipwreck in the Central Mediterranean". Passengers reported drifting without food or water for several days, said SOS Mediterranee. It was not immediately clear how those who died were said to have lost their lives. Ocean Viking also has aboard 113 people recovered on Wednesday night and a further 88 rescued on Thursday from "an overloaded inflatable craft".

Merchant vessel struck by missile west of Yemen's Hodeidah

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: A merchant vessel reported it had been hit by a missile and sustained damage 76 nautical miles west of Yemen's Hodeidah, the United Kingdom Maritime Operations (UKMTO) and the British security firm Ambrey said on Friday.

"The vessel has sustained some damage. The crew are reported safe and the vessel is proceeding to its next port of call," it said.

Later on Thursday, the US military said that Houthi fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Yemen toward the Gulf of Aden and two missiles toward the Red Sea, but there were no injuries or damage reported to US or coalition ships. The US military's Central Command said it destroyed nine anti-ship missiles and two drones in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

UK judge rejects Australian programmer's claim he created bitcoin

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Australian computer scientist Craig Wright is not "Satoshi Nakamoto", the pseudonym used by the creator of the cryptocurrency bitcoin when it launched in 2008, a UK court ruled on Thursday.

The decision follows a nearly two-month trial in London's High Court after Crypto Open Patent Alliance (COPA), a non-profit organisation set up to keep cryptocurrency technology free from patents, sued Wright.

Australia to resume funding to UN's main Palestinian relief agency

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY: Australia will resume funding to the United Nations' main Palestinian relief agency, Foreign Minister Penny Wong said on Friday, almost two months after pausing ties over allegations that some of the agency's employees participated in the Oct 7 Hamas attack on Israel.

Australia had consulted with UNRWA and other donors and was satisfied the aid agency was not a terror organisation, Wong said. New and additional safeguards would protect aid money, and A\$6 million (\$3.9 million) in paused funding would be released immediately, she said. "We have children and families that are starving and we have

a capacity along with the international community to assist them," Wong said at a news conference. "We know that UNRWA is central and vital to delivering that assistance." Australia along with more than a dozen countries, suspended funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in January after Israel accused 12 of the agency's 13,000 employees in Gaza of participating in the deadly Oct 7 Hamas attack.

The UN has launched an investigation into the allegations, and UNRWA fired some staff after Israel provided the agency with information on the allegations.

Data collected through 7th digital census is strategic resource for data driven Policy making: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on Friday said the data collected through 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 is a strategic resource for 'Data Driven Policy Making'. Ahsan Iqbal appreciated PBS on completing gigantic activity of 7th Population and Housing Census in challenging timelines during his visit to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) after assuming the charge of the Ministry, said a press

release issued here.

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal anticipated that it is the time to get the benefits from the digital Population Census that was conducted in 2023 and was approved unanimously.

Professor Ahsan Iqbal announced to conduct First Data Fest in Pakistan in 2024, the initiative of First Data Fest will be a great step towards extending the benefits of data and bridging gap between data producers and users.

As it will inform Government and Private Sec-

tors, Academia, business communities how to get benefit from Data.

"The population Growth Rate of Pakistan is 2.55% which is alarming and indicative of decline in proper allocation of resources", Prof. Ahsan Iqbal.

"Efforts should be made to work in collaboration with universities to share practical knowledge with students of Statics and relevant field", Prof. Ahsan Iqbal.

For Price Governance and controlling inflation,

PBS has developed Decision Support System for Inflation (DSSI). The live demonstration of system was presented by Mr. Muhammad Sarwar Gondal, Member (Support Services/IT).

Chief Statistician, Dr. Naem uz Zafar, Member (Support Services), Mr. Muhammad Sarwar Gondal and Member (Census and Surveys) along with senior officers of PBS extended a warm welcome to the Minister and congratulated him on assuming his responsibilities.



Nawabshah: President Asif Ali Zardari meets with elected representative at Zardari House.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Donald Blome, Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Quetta district admin warns stern action against illegal petrol pumps

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Quetta district administration has decided to take stern action against the illegal mini petrol pumps operating in the metropolises.

The administration has directed the owners and operators of illegal mini petrol pumps to close down their outlets, otherwise stern action would be taken against them.

The Assistant Commissioners of Quetta have issued official letters addressing the owners / operators of the illegal mini

petrol pumps to close their illegal business within five days. Otherwise, their outlets would be sealed and FIRs would be lodged against them on violation, it has been warned by the Assistant Commissioners.

Prior to this, the Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat had also taken notice of the operation of illegal mini petrol pumps in Quetta and directed to take action against those involved in the illegal business.

DG BCSA, participants of 3rd MCMC visit TBTP Wildlife component office

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Director General Balochistan Civil Service Academy (BCDA), Dr. Hafeez Jamali along with faculty members and participants of 3rd Mid-career Management Course (MCMC) visited the TBTP Wildlife Component office here on Friday.

Also present on the occasion were Secretary Forests and Wildlife, Abdul Rauf Baloch, Chief Conservator Syed Ghulam Muhammad and CDS Syed Abdul Jalil Agha were present.

The visitors were briefed about the modern

technology, EB X sense fly. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Forests and Wildlife, Abdul Rauf Baloch said that GIS and Remote sensing is requirement of the present era.

He said that no department can process without using modern technology and procedure without coming at par.

DG BCSA appreciated the initiatives of Forests and Wildlife and announced to continue activities with Forest department in future. In the end, gifts and souvenirs were distributed among the participants.

Delegation of Beef, Mutton Association calls on Hamza Shafiqat

QUETTA (APP)-A delegation of Beef and Mutton Association led by President of Beef Haji Sarmad Siddique and Naseebullah met Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafiqat on Friday. The delegation of Beef and Mutton Association said that a committee was formed to analyze the livestock market in the Price Control Committee meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner's Office.

In which representatives of Labor Department, Industry Department, DC Office and Beef and Mutton Association went to the cattle market and bought animals and determined the price after slaughtering them. The delegation said that the demand of Beef and Mutton Association is that the price list should be issued in the light of the report of the analysis committee.

They said that raids on butchers' shops, fines and arrests have been started as soon as Ramadan begins, this was causing concern among members of the Beef and Mutton Association.

They said that the series of raids on butchers' shops should be stopped and a new price list should be issued to them. Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafiqat listened carefully to the problems of the representatives of Beef and Mutton Association and assured them to solve their problems, saying that our effort would be to provide maximum relief to the people and save the butchers from loss. The Beef and Mutton Association announced the postponement of its protest in the light of the assurance to resolve the issues.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta and Administrator Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat presides over a meeting, at Metropolitan Corporation Office in Quetta.

AC Sanjawi visits utility store to review price of items

QUETTA (APP)- Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sanjawi Moeem Khan Gichki visited the utility store on the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Ziarat Hamoodur Rehman on Friday and reviewed the prices of items and quality of them. He found severe shortage of sugar and ghee in the store. The Assistant Commissioner also assured to meet the shortage immediately by contacting the concerned authorities to eliminate the shortage of essential items in the utility stores. He said that in order to provide relief to the people under the Prime Minister's Ramadan package in the holy month of Ramadan and ensure the supply of self-drinking flour, ghee, sugar, pulses, rice and other items in the stores in charge of utility stores.

SBP to announce monetary policy on March 18

KARACHI (INP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will announce monetary policy on Monday March 18, 2024.

According to a statement issued here on Friday, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of SBP will meet on March 18 to decide about the Monetary Policy.

The MPC will review the overall economic and financial situation, major indicators, data of different sectors, and major developments taken place since the announcement of the previous monetary policy.

DC Suhbatpur chairs meeting for provision of facilities to people in Ramadan

QUETTA (APP)-Deputy Commissioner (DC) Suhbatpur Mir Miran Khan Baloch on Friday chaired a meeting to implement official price control of edible items to provide maximum facilities to people in the Holy month of Ramadan.

Assistant commissioners of Anjuman Tajran Urban Action Committee and utility stores and others participated in the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Suhbatpur Mir Miran Khan Baloch said that the traders community should play their vital role to cooperate with the administration to implement the price control of items and provide cheap food items to the people during the month of Ramadan.

He said that by serving the poor and needy people in this blessed month, we could have peace of mind and beauty our hereafter. Legitimate profits should be earned, hoarding and high sellers would not be allowed.

PM, US ambassador discuss bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan Donald Blome paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The prime minister expressed satisfaction on the present state of bilateral relations. He emphasized the need to maintain the positive momentum by regular convening of existing dialogue mechanisms, focused on trade, investment, energy, health, defence, education, agriculture and climate change.

The prime minister said that his government would focus on macro-economic reforms to stabilize the economy and attract foreign investment. In this



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, receives comprehensive briefing at Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

No one to be allowed to violate official price list, warns Additional DC

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Additional Deputy Commissioner Chaman, Arif Khan Kakar has categorically stated that no one would be allowed to violate the official price list during the month of Ramadanul Mubarak in Chaman.

He said that stern action is being taken against the profiteers and hoarders.

He said that several shops were sealed and many shopkeepers were arrested on the charges of profiteering in Chaman on directives of the Deputy Commissioner Captain (Retd) Raja Athar Abbas.

The teams headed by Additional Deputy Com-



QUETTA: Haq Do Tehreek Chairman, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

Sardar Sarbuland welcomes resolution passed in NA regarding Shaheed ZAB

QUETTA (APP)-Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Balochistan Spokesperson Sardar Sarbuland Jogezi welcomed the resolution passed in the National Assembly (NA) regarding Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. He said that the Senate, Balochistan and Sindh Assembly have already passed the resolutions, Barrister Gohar's stance regarding the resolution was commendable, which PPP Balochistan was condemned.

In a statement issued here on Friday, Sardar Sarbuland Jogezi said that the Supreme Court of Pakistan has said in its opinion on the presidential reference regarding the execution of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto that the punishment given to Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was wrong.

He said that the Senate of Pakistan, Balochistan Assembly and Sindh Assembly approved the resolutions declaring Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto as martyr and national hero. After which the National Assembly has also passed this resolution with a huge majority, in which it is demanded that the unfair decision be changed, he said.

Religious scholars, leaders denounce Islamophobia as a threat to global peace, harmony

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) observed the 'International Day to Combat Against Islamophobia' across the nation, with religious scholars and leaders delivering poignant messages during Friday prayers.

They unequivocally denounced Islamophobia as a manifestation of fear, prejudice, and hatred against Muslims, stressing the urgent need for its swift and complete eradication.

The escalating tide of Islamophobia in the Western world, they warned, not only precipitates a clash between civilizations but also poses a grave threat to global peace.

Emphasizing Islam's core message of security and

peace for all humanity, they lamented that Islamophobia fosters interfaith animosity and erodes understanding between civilizations. Furthermore, they underscored Islam's teachings of promoting interfaith harmony, categorically stating that Islam is neither an extremist religion nor does it endorse terrorism.

PUC Chairman, Hafiz Muhammad Ashrafi, along with esteemed scholars including Allama Abdul Haq Mujahid, Maulana Muhammad Rafiq Jami, Maulana Nauman Hashir, Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Maulana Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Allama Zubair Abid, Maulana Muhammad

Asfaq Pittafi, Maulana Abu Bakr Hameed Sabri, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Maulana Haq Nawaz Khalid, Maulana Obaidullah Gormani, Allama Tahir-ul-Hasan, Maulana Hanif Osmani, Maulana Muhammad Asghar Khosa, Maulana Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahid, Maulana Abdul Malik Asif, Maulana Aslam Siddiqui, Maulana Abdul Hakeem Athar, Maulana Abdullah Haqqani, Maulana Abdul Waheed Farooqui, Maulana Abu Bakr Hamza, Maulana Habib Rehman Abid, Maulana Aminul Haque Ashrafi, Maulana Izharul Haque Khalid, Sahibzada Hamza Tahirul Hasan, Maulana Saadullah Ludhianwi, Maulana Anisur Rahman Baloch.

Pak Railways breaks record with longest freight train run

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has shattered records with its latest freight train journey, marking a significant milestone in the nation's transportation sector.

The historic freight train, spanning an impressive length of over 2,500 feet and comprising a whopping fifty coaches, embarked on its journey propelled by the formidable GE U40 locomotive engine, said Railway spokesperson on Friday.

He said that this monumental train journey commenced from Karachi, the bustling metropolis of Pakistan, carrying a staggering load of over 3,000 tons of cargo destined for Kotri.

This monumental initiative not only signifies a breakthrough for Pakistan Railways but also promises substantial benefits for the nation, he added.

By transferring such massive quantities of cargo via rail, the spokesperson said the endeavor was poised to alleviate the burden on road traffic significantly, easing congestion and enhancing transportation efficiency across the country.

Moreover, he said the shift towards rail transport for freight purposes aligns with global efforts towards environmental preservation, as it effectively reduces pollution and carbon emissions associated with traditional road transport methods.



LAHORE: Pakistan Railway's longest freight train on way to its destination.

Submission of papers for Senate election begins

KARACHI (APP): The process of submission of nomination papers for Senate elections has started from today (March 15) which will continue till March 16.

According to the schedule issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan for the Senate elections, the Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh/Returning Officer for Senate Elections Sharifullah is receiving nomination papers from candidates.

The list of candidates will be published on March 17, after which the scrutiny of papers will be done on March 19.

Pak Army organizes cultural symposium in Bajaur

BAJAUR (Online): Pakistan Army organized a cultural symposium for the protection of regional language, traditions and culture in Bajaur district.

Renowned poets from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the symposium. The local singers presented Pashto language and its historical significance in their own style through folk music. More than 75 paintings by various artists were also exhibited in the symposium, while stalls of books, handicrafts and local products were also set up.

Ramadan is month of personal accountability & reform: Samina

Independent Report
QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri on Friday said that the month of Ramadan was the month of personal accountability. This month teaches us to control our desires and self through which the believers have the ability to lead a life with patience and discipline, she said.

She expressed these views in her statement here saying that this time in Ramadan, must remember the Palestinian brothers and sisters in your prayers and make special prayers for them that Allah protects the Palestinian citizens from the persecution of Israel and grants us Muslims the ability to help the Palestinian people. She said that it was a matter of concern for the Muslim Ummah that the Israelis have failed to stop the ongoing brutality of the Palestinians. Senator Samina also said that we should look around and if someone was in need, help him immediately, this way

our society would develop, it would not only bless your halal sustenance but also the prayers of the poor.

She further said that all over the world, the prices of essential items are reduced as soon as Ramadan comes, but in Pakistan, it has often been seen that the prices of essential items skyrocket with the arrival of this blessed month. She urged the district administration and concerned authorities to crack down on hoarders and sellers of expensive items and take necessary steps to provide cheap items to the people. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that Ramadan Mubarak was a holy and auspicious month. Allah Almighty blesses the sustenance of those who take legitimate profit during the month of fasting. Give full relief to the people in order to get the satisfaction of. Believe me, Allah will greatly bless and increase your sustenance with this action, she noted.



QUETTA: A view of accumulated sewage water on inmdad chowk crating problems for locals.