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Ex-CJP Tassaduq Jillani to head Inquiry Commission to probe IHC Judges' allegations

Cabinet approves constitution of inquiry commission to probe allegations of spy agencies' meddling in judicial affairs; Issues commission ToRs, repudiates allegations of IHC judges, declares them to be "inappropriate"; Inquiry commission would submit its report in 60 days, say sources; PTI denounces inquiry commission under chairmanship of Tasadduq Hussain Jilani

LAHORE (APP): The federal cabinet on Saturday approved constitution of an Inquiry Commission headed by former Chief Justice of Pakistan Tassaduq Hussain Jilani to probe the contents of the letter written by six judges of the Islamabad High Court.

The cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif considered the contents of a letter written by six judges of the IHC in details, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was told that under an announcement of the full court meeting of Supreme Court, a proposal over constitution of a commission was agreed in a meeting between the CJP and the prime minister.

The meeting also approved Terms of Reference (ToRs) under which the inquiry commission would fully probe the allegations levelled by the IHC judges and decide whether these were correct or otherwise.

It would investigate whether any personnel was directly responsible for interfering into the judicial matters. The commission under its findings would recommend proceedings against anyone from the agency, department or government if found involved into such issue. It could, if found necessary during the course of its proceedings, probe other related issues as well.

The meeting while rejecting the allegations regarding interference by the executive, termed it inappropriate.

They cabinet members under unanimous opinion said that they firmly believed in the separation of powers among the state institutions under the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan.

The prime minister while reiterating his strong belief in the freedom of judiciary and constitutional jurisdiction, also took the members of the cabinet into confidence about his meeting with the chief justice.

The cabinet completely endorsed the prime minister's decisions and steps taken so far.

Meanwhile to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Saturday denounced the inquiry commission under the chairmanship of former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Tasadduq Hussain Jilani, formed after the Islamabad High Court's (IHC) judges' letter.

Reform Cell established for bringing reforms in various sectors

Independent Report
QUETTA: The government of Balochistan has established reform cell under leadership of Chief Secretary.

According to an official handout issued here on Saturday, the reform cell would be comprised nine members. The reform cell would determine as which sectors need reforms in the province.

18 Senators elected unopposed in upcoming Senate elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): Eighteen candidates have been elected unopposed as senators out of a total of 147 aspirants who deposited their nomination papers for the 48 vacant Senate seats.

The final list of candidates from Returning Officers shows that out of 18 elected unopposed, seven are from Punjab's general seats. Similarly, in Balochistan, senators for seven general seats, two women seats, and two Ulama/technocrat seats have won without any opposition.

A spokesperson for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced that preparations have been completed for conducting elections on April 2 to fill 30 vacant seats. Ballot papers have been printed, and transportation of election materials to returning officers has also been finalized. The elections would be held on 29 General, eight women, nine technocrat/Ulema and two non-Muslim seats.

He said that the peace would prevail finally in the war against terrorists.

He also asserted that those shedding blood of innocent people wouldn't be spared at all. Moreover, he directed to the concerned authorities to provide best medical treatment facilities to all the injured of blast.

Lawyers' organizations reject Govt's commission on IHC judges letter issue

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan lawyers' organizations have rejected the commission formed by the federal government about the issue of letter written by the judges of Islamabad High Court. Joint meeting of the lawyers organizations was held under presidency of member of Pakistan Bar Council, Munir Ahmed Kakar here on Saturday.

The lawyers organizations vehemently rejected the government's commission with consensus. According to a press release issued in this regard, the commission formed led by any retired judge is unacceptable. It was demanded that full court should hear matter after taking suomoto notice.

It was vowed that the lawyers of province would not let affected the independence of judiciary. Moreover, the joint meeting of the lawyers organizations was convened on April 2, 2024. The future course of action would be decided in the next meeting of lawyers.



KARACHI: Member Balochistan Assembly Mir Liaquat Lehri and Mir Zulfiqar Ali Lehri meeting with Sindh Minister for Prisons Ali Hassan Zardari



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet

PM prods cabinet members to immediately move towards meeting 5-year roadmap targets

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday urged his cabinet members to immediately commence work towards achieving the targets set in a five-year roadmap as shared with all the relevant ministries.

Addressing a meeting of the cabinet, the prime minister said that he had shared broad parameters of the five-year plan with the relevant ministries by setting various targets to be achieved immediately without wasting time.

Under the parameters, he said the ministries concerned should evolve mechanisms, hire human resources and formulate strategies to meet the set targets, he added.

"Responsibility with accountability will be the hallmark of the five-year roadmap as no system in the world can progress without it," he opined.

The prime minister said that for this purpose, all the available resources and tools should be explored besides, those not available immediately be procured.

He said that to overcome delays and red tape, a forum like the Special In-

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LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar is talking to the media at Gwalmandi.

Targets in writing have been given to ministries for first time in history of country: Attaullah

Party workers played important role in continuity of democracy: Tarar

LAHORE (Online): Information Minister Atta Ullah Tarar has said improving the economy is top priority of government.

"Targets in writing have been assigned to the ministries for the first time in the history of the country. These targets include elimination of unemployment, decrease in inflation and resolution of economic problems, he said this while talking to media men here Saturday.

He remarked stability is coming in the country slowly and gradually. Its effects will soon come to

Imran appoints focal persons for prison meetings after SOPs agreement

RAWALPINDI (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Imran Khan has appointed Barrister Gohar, Sher Afzal Marwat, and Barrister Umeer Niazi as focal persons for conducting meetings in prison.

This decision comes following the establishment of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) between Imran Khan and the Superintendent of Adiala Jail, under which both parties have mutually agreed and signed.

According to the SOPs, three focal persons have been designated by Imran Khan to facilitate meetings in the jail. Barris-

ter Gohar Ali Khan, Sher Afzal Marwat, and Barrister Umeer Niazi will oversee the organization of these meetings as per the agreed protocols.

Under the SOPs, each focal person will nominate two individuals for meetings with Imran Khan in jail. These meetings are scheduled to take place twice a week, with Tuesdays reserved for meetings with Imran Khan's family members and Thursdays for interactions with lawyers and other political figures. However, any meeting requested under court orders will be subject to Imran Khan's consent.

May 9 riots: ATC sentences 51 accused to five-year in prison

GUJRANWALA (Agencies): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Gujranwala on Saturday awarded five-year imprisonment each to 51 accused who were found involved in the May 9 riots last year.

The ATC judge Natasha Naseem Supra conducted the hearing of a case related to vandalism and arson at Gujranwala Cantt in which 23 PTI leaders, including the party founder Imran Khan and Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, as well as over 400 suspects had been nominated.

While announcing a short verdict, the court gave a five-year jail-term each to the accused political workers who were arrested from the vandalism site while some of them were arrested after geofencing, as per the police charge sheet.

The ATC will issue a detailed verdict later.

According to the police, no prominent PTI leader or party office bearer is among the 51 convicts who were awarded sentences today.

Initially, the police had nominated 23 PTI leaders

in the case and more than 200 unidentified suspects. The number of nominated persons reached over 400 after the police interrogated the suspects.

During the trial, 199 witnesses recorded testimonies in the court.

Moreover, Gujranwala police also questioned the incarcerated PTI founder and Qureshi at Adiala Jail in the Gujranwala Cantt vandalism and arson case. However, the former premier did not cooperate with the investigators, according to the police, and asked his lawyers to submit reply.

An empowered commission needed to be formed on issue of missing persons, emphasizes CJ BHC



Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Justice Balochistan High Court, Mr. Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar has emphasized that the issue of missing persons is a serious issue and as such there is a need to form an empowered commission to address it.

Mr. Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar was addressing the inauguration ceremony of Judicial Complex in Surab on Saturday.

The CJ said that delay in development projects as well as violation of merit and sale and purchase of the vacancies wouldn't be tolerated.

He said that this land is like mother for us and no compromise would be made on its sanctity and dignity at all. He announced that the doors of judiciary are open for everyone without any discrimination.

He said that he believes in distribution of powers and all judges of the High Court should consider them completely empowered.

He also said that we are determined to provide Justice to the masses in remote areas of the province.

He declared Sorab as session.

Earlier, the Chief Justice was received by the Commissioner Kalat, Ali Akbar Baloch upon his arrival along

with fellow judges and other staff. The smartly turned out contingent of police presented guard of honour to the Chief Justice.

He formally inaugurated the new building of Judicial complex Surab.

Also accompanied with the CJ were the judges of High Court including Mr Justice Muhammad Ejaz Swati, Mr Justice Muhammad Kamran Musakhail, Mr Justice Nazeer Ahmed Langove, Mr Justice Muhammad Aamir Nawaz Rana, Mr Justice Rizvi Khan Baraich, Mr Justice Iqbal Kasi, Mr Justice Sardar Ahmed Halimi, besides Advocate General Asif Reki.

Pak HC attends Presidential reception

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan High Commissioner Rukhsana Afzaal has attended the annual diplomatic reception hosted by President of Republic of Singapore Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Madam Jane Yuniko Ittogi.

The High Commissioner's photo was posted on President Tharman's Official Instagram, a post on X said on Saturday.

She also met Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Presidential Palace.

Heavy rainfall claims seven lives in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as seven people died and nine others were injured due to last day's rain in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Dr. Khateer Ahmed, Director General (DG) Rescue 1122 told media men here on Saturday.

DG said that four people who died in various accidents are less than 10 years old. Roof collapse incidents occurred in Peshawar, Nowshera, Shangla, Bannu and Bajaur, he said.



SINGAPORE: Pakistan's High Commissioner in Singapore, Ms Rukhsana Afzaal in a photo with President of Singapore Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Madam Jane in the Annual Diplomatic Reception, hosted by the Singaporean President

Trial of civilians in military courts case: SC amends Dec 13 order

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) while issuing order in respect of trial of civilians in military court case has amended December 13 order on restraining military courts from announcing decision.

It has been said in the order that Attorney General (AG) told during the hearing 105 cases are pending hearing in military courts. Some in the cases of 15 to 20 persons can be acquitted. A 6-member larger bench presided over by Justice Amin ud Din had heard the case.

It was further said in

the order issued by them that as per Attorney General (AG) some cases are of lesser punishment.

AG told the court too that the period of detention of the accused will also be included in case sentence is given.

AG requested that permission be given for announcing the decision of acquittal or lesser sentence. Counsel of no party opposed the amendment to the extent of AG plea.

Military courts can announce the decision in acquittal and lesser sentence cases.

CM Punjab orders grand operation against electricity theft, smuggling, hoarding

Says whoever is found involved in power theft, smuggling and hoarding, should not be given any relief

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, chairing a meeting of the Energy Department here on Saturday, directed to adopt zero-tolerance policy against electricity theft, smuggling and hoarding.

The CM directed authorities concerned to conduct a grand operation across the province against electricity theft, smuggling and hoarding and to implement a policy devised in a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister yesterday.

The CM directed to fix targets in this regard, and present a compliance report on their completion after the expiry of one

month deadline. Every connection including industries, factories, shops, houses, shopping malls would be checked, she stressed. The relevant authorities would be responsible in case of any failure, she warned.

The CM said whoever is found involved in power theft, smuggling and hoarding, should not be given any relief. She also directed to legislate for severe punishment and heavy fines for the complete elimination of electricity theft. She highlighted that electricity theft is already a cognizable offense. So, arrests and immediate punishment should be ensured.

The CM said that action would also be taken against government officials involved in electricity theft, adding that black sheep within the system should be identified and tried under the relevant laws.

The chief minister said the Ministry of Energy will also monitor all electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) of the province. She directed to form a task force of the experts and government representatives to devise an effective strategy to curb this menace. This task force would monitor the Ministry of Power, the performance of DISCOs and the operation against power theft.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding climate change.

PM directs formation of committee on climate change

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday directed the formation of a committee to identify problems related to climate change and to tackle them.

He was chairing a meeting regarding Ministry of Climate Change.

The Prime Minister was briefed on the progress on the policies and projects related to climate change.

He said climate change was a very important issue, adding Pakistan was among the countries that had least role in climate destruction but was the most affected by climate change.

He said a comprehensive and effective strategy was needed to counter the effects of climate change.

Climate change was related to agriculture, energy, water, infrastructure and other sectors, he added.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarrar, Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema, high level officials of relevant departments and experts of climate change attended the meeting.

CM, Japan ambassador discuss progress of Rs8.5bn JICA projects

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in his meeting with Ambassador of Japan Mr WADA Mitsuhiro discussed the development projects launched with the support of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for Rs8500.5 million. The meeting was attended by the Consul General of Japan Mr Tahara, and First Secretary Mr Fukuda while the chief minister was assisted by his Principal Secretary Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Najam Shah and Secretary Investment Mureed Rahmo.

The chief minister said that the JICA project of upgradation of Girls Schools into Elementary

Schools in rural areas has been launched for Rs2,287.24 million and was at the advanced stage. He added that the prequalification of the contractor and bids for construction and completion of works have been finalised.

It was pointed out that in the first phase, 11 elementary schools were being constructed, including seven in Khairpur district and four in Naushehroferoze. In the second phase construction of elementary schools in Sukkur, Larkana and Malir Karachi would be taken up. The main components of the project include civil works and procurement of furniture. The Ambassador of Japan said that the

project was most important, therefore it needed to be expedited. Discussing the program for Flood Response Through Reconstruction of Education Facilities the CM said that the project has been initiated with the assistance of JICA in 9 districts- three in Mirpurkhas Division, two each in Nawabshah and Khairpur, one each in Sukkur and Ghotki.

The project has been launched for Rs1.566 billion, including Rs1.42 billion of JICA and Rs142.41 million of Sindh government share. Under the project primary school buildings badly damaged by the floods and heavy rains are being reconstructed. The damaged furniture would be replaced.



KARACHI: Governor of Sindh Muhammad Kamran Khan Tessori, Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, Consul General of Turkey Jamal Sangho posing for a group photograph along with children during Ramadan Children Iftar program ceremony, in the Provincial Capital.

Punjab govt focusing on solving problems of people: Azma Bukhari

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said on Saturday that the Punjab government was focusing on solving the problems of the people of Punjab and in this regard various initiatives had been taken during one month.

While briefing media about the one month performance of the Punjab government here, she said that 6.4 million families were being facilitated under the Ramadan Nigheban package as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

She said that the Punjab government had decided to conduct a survey of poor people in three months. Azma Bukhari said that 90 days target had been given for making neat and clean Punjab and work in this regard was ongoing.

She said, "Maryam Nawaz believes in taking practical measures and not on hollow slogans.

A free wifi project is being started again and the

government would provide services at doorsteps.

The Safe Cities Project started by Shehbaz Sharif would now be launched in 18 more districts in Punjab," she added.

She said roads would be constructed in Punjab at a cost of billion of rupees. Azma Bukhari said that free medicines were available in emergency of all public hospitals across the province, adding that hepatitis patients would get their medicines in their homes. She said for the first time prices of essential items were reducing in Punjab.

Under the Green Punjab Programme, 1.8 million saplings had been planted in one day across the province, she said and added that a new mechanism was being brought to control prices of essential items.

She said that steps were being taken to solve property-related problems of expats.

IGP Punjab visited Chinese Consulate

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar visited the Chinese Consulate Lahore and met Consul General Zhao Shiren.

He expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of Chinese citizens in Shangla suicide attack. DIG Special Protection Unit Muntizar Mehdi, AIG Operations Punjab Dr. Asad Ijaz Malhi, Chinese Consulate officers were also present. During the meeting, ongoing projects under CPEC in Punjab, security issues of Chinese citizens were discussed.

IG Punjab said that the security of Chinese citizens and their property is the first priority in the context of CPEC projects. District police and PHP patrolling on all routes of movement of Chinese nationals has been made more stringent and effective. He said that checking of suspicious persons and vehicles is being ensured through special police posts on the routes of Chinese residents.

The Chinese Consul General expressed satisfaction and confidence in the security of Chinese citizens and their property on various projects provided by Punjab Police. Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren said that Punjab Police is providing the best security to Chinese citizens on various projects including CPEC.

ANF recovers over 1750 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 1750 kg drugs and 25000 intoxicated tablets and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that 25,000 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a Jeddah-bound female passenger netted at Islamabad Airport.

In another operation, 2.2 kg Ice was recovered from a parcel being sent to Greece from Sialkot Courier Office. 1425 kg hashish was recovered from Toba Achakzai in Qilla Abdullah. 225 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near Western Bypass Quetta. 100 kg opium was recovered from Nokundi Chagai area and 45 kg hashish was recovered.

CM Punjab message Every day should be celebrated as Zero Waste Day

Independent Report
LAHORE: "Every day should be celebrated as Zero Waste Day," said Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in her message on "Zero Waste Day." She added, "Today there is a greater need to consider the importance of responsible use of essential commodities and waste management."

Madam Chief Minister highlighted, "The world is facing numerous environmental challenges. We need an industrialized economy where resources are used efficiently and waste is generated to a minimum." She said, "People should adopt eco-friendly alternatives by reducing single-use

plastics."

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "Comprehensive waste management system is being introduced in all major cities of Punjab." She added, "For the first time, a sustainable and effective system of village sanitation is being devised." Madam Chief Minister said, "It is my commitment to see every city, village and neighborhood clean." She added, "With collective effort we can give our children a clean environment. We must choose sustainable products and plan to reduce food waste."

Madam Chief Minister said, "Old items need to be repaired, donated, or repurposed."

Woman killed, three hurt in road mishap

BUREWALA (APP): A woman was killed while three others sustained injuries due to collision between passenger van and loading vehicle at Multan road.

According to details, a passenger van was coming to Burewala from Multan and suddenly collided with a shazore vehicle near Pakhi Morr while overtaking.

As a result, 48 years old Shahida Bibi died on the spot. While Muhammad Afzal, Ali Haider and Mushtaq Ahmad sustained injuries. Rescue 1122 shifted the injured to District Headquarters hospital.



LAHORE: Provincial Information Minister Uzma Bukhari briefing media persons about one month progress of Punjab Government at Punjab Assembly.

KP Food Authority's crackdown continues

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The Malakand Food Safety Authority team checked milk and other food items with modern mobile food testing lab at Swat Expressway. More than 3,000 litres of substandard and adulterated milk was destroyed, spokesperson of the Authority said here Saturday.

250 packs of non-labeled and substandard ice cream was also recovered from a vehicle and destroyed by imposing heavy fines. During the operation conducted by the Food Authority and the Cantonment Board in Nowshera Cantt, several bakeries and its production units were checked and sealed four bakeries for poor hygiene and sanitation conditions.

About 12000 liters of syrup, 10 kg of dye, 200

liters of oil, 10 kg of besan and 125 kg of syrup were seized from the bakery units and destroyed on the spot.

Dir lower team also conducted inspections in various markets where more than 65 kg of expired food items were exported and destroyed, spokesperson said.

Heavy fines have been imposed on owners for violating hygiene rules, spokesperson said, adding, Food safety teams should speed up operations against adulteration mafia across the province, directed by Director General Food Authority Wasif Saeed.

Citizens should also timely inform the Food Authority against violation of hygiene rules and non-standard foodstuff businesses, Wasif Saeed said.

Major operations of FIA Peshawar Zone continue against sales of fake drugs

PESHAWAR (APP): The major operations of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Peshawar Zone continued as six inquiries have been registered against the elements involved in the sale of fake medicines, a FIA spokesman said here Saturday.

The raids were conducted by Composite Circle Mardan and Abbottabad, the spokesman of FIA said, adding, it was conducted at various medical stores located in Thakot, Battagram Bazar, Abbottabad, and Topi Bazar Swabi.

He said that a large number of fake and unregistered medicines were recovered during the raids and Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan

(DRAP) authorities sealed fake and unregistered medicines on the spot and sent them to the laboratory. He said that several medical stores were also sealed and inquiries have been registered against the accused.

He said that in the light of the report of DRAP officials, cases will be registered against the accused and arrests will be made. He said that special raid teams have been formed by FIA in all circles to tighten the grip against the elements involved in the sale of fake and unregistered medicines.

The official said that Peshawar raid teams are conducting joint operations with DRAP officials and all resources are being used to arrest the accused.

DPO Tank visits martyred cop's house

TANK (APP): District Police Officer Tank Abdus Salam Khalid offered condolence to the family of a martyred cop at Garra Budha village on Saturday.

A police spokesman said that the DPO visited the house of Police constable Akbar Ali who had been martyred the other day, met the family members there, and offered feteha for the soul of the martyr.

The DPO assured his family members of continued support of the police department and said, that when these defenders of the nation sacrifice their lives for their soil and people, they are not dead, they are alive, and their services are always remembered by living nations. He vowed to continue the war against terrorism till the complete elimination.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarrar offering Feteha and condoling death of PML-N worker Chaudhry Ateeq along with Rana Mashhood Ahmed and Syed Tauseef Shah at his residence.

Rescuers urged to maintain high standards

LAHORE (APP): Emergency Services Secretary Dr Rizwan Naseer welcomed 623 rescuers recruited for provinces of Sindh and Balochistan at the Emergency Services Academy, Lahore.

Addressing the newly recruited rescuers of Sindh and Balochistan at the Emergency Services Academy (ESA) Thokar Niaz Baig here on Saturday, he congratulates them on becoming a part of the Rescue 1122 life-saving Emergency Service.

Dr. Rizwan Naseer said, "You are going to join a service, which has a short history but with many achievements." He advised the newly recruited rescuers to treat emergency victims with professional manners and follow high standards.

Dr. Rizwan Naseer said that Rescue 1122, which started from Lahore in 2004, was functional in all districts of Punjab and in other provinces of Pakistan. The service has rescued 14.5 million emergency victims while maintaining its average response time of 7 minutes.

The service maintained the standard in all districts of Punjab. The Motorbike Ambulance Service (MAS) has responded to 2,069,008 with 4 minutes average response time, which is an achievement even internationally and the first modern Rescue Fire Service has saved losses worth over 642 billion by improving response time and professional firefighting on modern lines, he added.



KARACHI: Members of Karakoram National Movement are holding protest demonstration for demanding Justice for Inara and recovery of missing girl Falak Noor, held at Karachi press club.



PESHAWAR: Beautiful eye-catching view of light rain and hailstorm in Peshawar

Swati challenges EC decision of linking Senate polls in KP

PESHAWAR (Online): PTI leader Azam Swati has challenged in court the decision of linking Senate election in KP to oath taking on reserved seats.

The petitioner has filed petition in Peshawar High Court (PHC) through Ali Azeem Afridi advocate.

According to petition Senate election process will be affected due to this decision of Election Commission (EC).

Ensuring Senate election on time is constitutional responsibility of the EC. It has been said in the

petition that EC has not heard candidates in Senate election matter and issued decision without hearing.

The members who were heard have been elected just now and they have not taken oath. The petitioner Azam Swat is candidate in Senate election. He was not heard.

Azam Swat took this plea in the petition that delaying Senate election in KP is illegal.

Petitioner has requested the court to nullify EC March 26 decision and ensure Senate polls on April 02 in KP.

Pak-Iraq trade via Gwadar, Basra seaports to further boost bilateral ties: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ambassador of Iraq to Pakistan, Hamid Abbas Lafta has trade between Pakistan and Iraq through Gwadar and Basra seaports would be further strengthened bilateral relations between the two countries taking them to new heights.

"The two sides are committed to foster their multilateral relationship and that Pakistani manpower has a vast spectrum in the fields of agriculture, medical and petro-chemical in Iraq."

He said that the two countries also enjoy exemplary ties in the field of defence and that Iraq has recently procured a complete package of Super Mushahk from Pakistan.

The Ambassador was talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari which called on him here

on Saturday.

Envoy Hamid Abbas Lafta said that both the countries always demonstrate complete harmony at regional and international forums, adding that Iraq is a country of opportunities with strong economy, having annual budget of \$110 billion and wants to promote ties with all the countries.

Although both Pakistan and Iraq were bonded in strong relationship yet the trade relations were at the lowest level which needed to be enhanced and for this purpose the Chambers of both the sides can play a significant role, he mentioned.

The envoy further said that the Iraqi government has unveiled its national action plan for the investments and the Pakistani businessmen have to come forward to avail these opportunities.

Hamid Abbas further said that the doors of his embassy are open for the business community of Pakistan in particular for the ICCI and that the Embassy will feel pride in sharing the Iraq's business opportunities with the Chamber for the benefit of the business community.

Speaking on the occasion, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that despite having a huge potential by both the sides, the trade volume was not upto the mark and to overcome the problem direct connectivity between the two brotherly countries was much needed.

He said that along with other multiple investment opportunities in different areas Pakistan also enjoys the tourism potential especially the northern areas, thereby the Iraqi side must grasp this opportunity also.



LAHORE: A vendor is displaying bangles at his shop attraction for customers ahead of the upcoming festival of Eid al-Fitr, in the Provincial Capital.

Navigating Carbon Market pathway to Pakistan's sustainable development

ISLAMABAD (APP): The concept of carbon trading is not just a buzzword in the global environmental discourse; it is a critical mechanism for countries like Pakistan to address the challenges posed by climate change while sustaining economic growth.

A training workshop on understanding carbon market mechanisms, held in collaboration with the Embassy of Denmark and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), signifies a pivotal step towards integrating Pakistan into the global carbon economy.

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director SDPI, emphasized the novelty of carbon marketing within Pakistan's climate change dialogue. The unsuccessful attempt to implement a

carbon tax in 2010 and ongoing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlight the complexities and the urgent need for effective policy instruments in this domain.

The primary goal of carbon trading is to incentivize the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, thereby mitigating the impact of carbon dioxide on the environment. Dr. Suleri poignantly noted that our very existence, ecology, food security, and livelihoods hinge on our collective efforts to preserve the environment. The transition to renewable energy, while technologically feasible, faces significant hurdles in terms of infrastructure development, necessitating a phased approach.

The United States' implementation of an emissions trading system,

with its cap-and-trade policies, serves as an illustrative model. It sets a precedent for establishing emission quotas and allows industries with surplus allowances to sell them, creating a market-driven approach to environmental conservation. Pakistan's journey towards establishing a robust carbon market is underway, with policies under review and discussions at the Climate Change Council. The private sector's existing mechanisms provide a foundation upon which to build. The integration of such market-based approaches into Pakistan's policy framework can catalyze sustainable development, ensuring that the nation's exports remain competitive in the face of the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).



LAHORE: Tailor busy stitching clothes for upcoming Eid ul Fitr festival.

LCCI gives feedback to Finance Minister on SRO 420(I)/2024

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Saturday gave its feedback on SRO 420(I)/2024 dated 21st March 2024 and hoped that the suggestions put-forth by LCCI would be given due consideration and incorporated into the draft scheme prior to its implementation.

In this connection, the LCCI President Kashif Anwar has written a letter to Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, according to the Chamber's spokesman here Saturday.

In the letter, the LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that Lahore Chamber is fully committed in supporting the government in its efforts to register the shopkeepers and promoting documentation in the economy.

Kashif Anwar said that the draft Tajir Dost Scheme proposes

Monthly Advance Tax for all traders and shopkeepers. It is pertinent to mention that majority of shopkeepers rely on lawyers for tax filing. The monthly filing requirement will impose administrative burdens and increase the cost of doing business due to additional legal fees and penalties for traders. He recommended Annual/Bi-Annual payment of Advance Tax to alleviate these concerns.

The LCCI President added that the scheme proposes calculating tax based on the trader's annual rental value, equivalent to 10 percent of the fair market value of business premises. "We are of the view that using Rental Value or Area for tax calculation lacks rationality, as it has no link with turnover and may result in businesses being taxed on unrealized income."

Shanghai home to 92,000 5G base stations

ISLAMABAD (APP): China's financial hub Shanghai has built 92,000 5G base stations so far, local authorities said.

By the end of 2023, 38.5 percent of the city's mobile communication base stations were 5G.

Shanghai recorded a total of over 18.7 million 5G mobile phone users during this period, up nearly 40 percent year on year, and accounting for 40.8 percent of Shanghai's total mobile phone users, according to the Shanghai Communications Administration, news reported. Meanwhile, more than 11.5 million households in Shanghai had access to the internet through fiber-optic cables in 2023, of which about 2.7 million households could browse the internet with a fixed broadband speed of 1,000 Mbps or above, said the administration.

FCCI to remain open today for renewal of membership

FAISALABAD (APP): Renewal of membership campaign of the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) for the year 2024-25 is going on and the chamber office would remain open on Sunday, March 31, as well which is the last date for renewal of membership.

According to an FCCI spokesman, the chamber had made the best possible arrangements to facilitate its members and in this connection, the offices of FCCI would remain open from 9 a.m. till midnight 12 a.m. on Sunday.

The members failing to renew their membership could not cast their vote in the coming election of the FCCI, he added.

SNGPL collects fine of Rs. 49.6mn

PESHAWAR (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) authorities in Mardan Region on Saturday collected a fine of Rs. 49.6 million in a campaign against gas thieves.

According to the sources of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines, the fine was imposed on 514 consumers who had tampered their meters while another 229 were found to have got direct gas connections.

Under the supervision of Regional Manager Sui Gas Mardan Region Akif Noor, all possible efforts and resources are being used to reduce gas losses.

One of the reasons for the reduction in losses is

the replacement of old rotten lines.

This year, the work of replacing 60 km of old lines is going on, which has not only reduced the gas losses, but has also improved the pressure and delivery of gas.

Regional Manager Sui Akif Noor said that for the provision of gas in Ramadan and for quick resolution of customers' complaints, a situation room is working in which an officer is on duty around the clock, for gas theft and other complaints.

Citizens should report on the helpline 1199. The name of the informer of gas theft will be kept confidential, he concluded.

RCCI office will remain open on Sunday for renewal of membership

RAWALPINDI (APP): The membership department of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) will remain open on Sunday to facilitate the members for membership renewal process as March 31 is the last date for renewal.

In a statement, Saqib Rafiq President RCCI said that they had already intimated and advised the members to get the chamber's membership renewed on or before the last date. Members have to submit the required documents, and deposit the prescribed fee, he said.

Banks need to ensure lending to priority sectors' SMEs to stimulate growth: FRIA

LAHORE (INP): Senior Vice Chairman Feroze Zehra Road Industrial Association (FRIA), Shahbaz Aslam has asked the banks for lending to priority manufacturing sectors of SMEs to stimulate economic growth and development in the country.

In a statement issued on Saturday, he said that we need to set our primary agenda to strategize and enhance financing and lending to priority sectors to stimulate economic growth and development in Pakistan.

Shahbaz Aslam pointed out the government's ongoing efforts to promote economic stability, fiscal discipline, and sustainable growth.

He reiterated the FRIA's commitment to working closely with the banking sector to address the financing needs of priority sectors and ensure the effective implementation of the proposed strategies and initiatives.

Shahbaz Aslam highlighted the SBP's role in providing regulatory support, policy guidance and financial incentives to encourage banks to expand their financing activities in alignment with the government's priorities.

He said that despite the significant importance, over 5 million SMEs have been facing a huge credit gap, receiving only 7 percent of private sector credit, far below than neighboring countries like Bangladesh (25 percent) and India (18 percent), with the State Bank committing to increase SME credit share to 17 percent by 2023. To achieve this, we must advocate for targeted and fixed SME allocations in concessional financing schemes.

He emphasized the critical role of the banking sector in supporting the government's development agenda and urged the banks to increase financing and lending to priority sectors, namely agriculture and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

The SVC FRIA requested the Pakistan Banks to lead a task force comprising representatives from the banking sector, government, and relevant stakeholders, with the primary objective to



HYDERABAD: Women selecting and purchasing sandals to preparation of upcoming Eid ul Fitr.

Secretary Agric says: All possible steps being taken to meet cotton production targets

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said on Saturday that miscellaneous duties of various wings of the Agriculture Department had been abolished so that they could properly help farmers in sowing and cotton picking process.

He presided over the first meeting of 'Cotton Campaign 2024', which reviewed the basic issues, challenges and targets, said a press release issued here.

He ordered for taking on board the Irrigation Department officials and issuing an advisory for farmers, keeping in view the weather forecast for the next 15 days.

He said that digital monitoring of the field staff would be done and this year the campaign should be conducted with more passion than last year, so that cotton production targets could be achieved.

South Punjab Agriculture Secretary Saqib Ali Ateeel told the meeting that integrated pest management (IPM) model should be adopted for controlling cotton pests.

Hardpan soil should be broken before cotton cultivation so that the nutritional needs of plants could be met, he added.

Punjab Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo expressed dissatisfaction over the arrangement at Fair Price Shop and directed officials concerned to improve facilities.

He paid a surprise visit to the Agriculture Department's Agricultural Fair Price Shop, here on Saturday.

He instructed the staff to improve their performance and ensure convenience for citizens in purchase of different items in the bazaar. He stressed importance of reaching out to the public in the best possible manner as per vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He also ordered to increase the number of counters for citizens and to allocate separate portions for women. He maintained that all items in the Fair Price Shops should be abundantly available from 9 am to 5 pm, with no shortage of any item.

SCCI VP condemns terror attack on Chinese nationals

SIALKOT (APP): Vice President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Amer Majeed Sheikh vehemently condemned the heinous terror attack targeting Chinese nationals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement, Vice President SCCI Amer Majeed Sheikh expressed his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and said that the business community of Sialkot stood in solidarity with the Chinese nation during this difficult time.

He further said that the attack, which claimed the lives of five Chinese

nationals and a Pakistani driver, is a reprehensible act of violence that not only undermines the safety and security of foreign investors and workers in Pakistan but also threatens the longstanding friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and China.

On behalf of the industry of Sialkot that is deeply invested in fostering economic ties with China, the Vice President recognized the invaluable contributions of Chinese companies and workers to the development and prosperity of Pakistan.



KARACHI: Women busy in shopping for upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr at Lines Area.

NTUF and RR agree to revolutionize T2T recycling industry

FAISALABAD (APP): National Textile University Faisalabad (NTUF) and Reverse Resources (RR) in collaboration with KnowTex have agreed to revolutionize Textile-to-Textile (T2T) recycling industry in Pakistan.

According to a spokesman for NTUF, both institutions would strive to establish a structured framework for managing textile waste besides ensuring transparency and enabling verifiable traceability in the recycling process. He said that the project would have very beneficial impact for local industry. It would also help address various legislative requirements of Pakistani textiles importing countries besides solving the biggest challenges of textile waste recycling of Pakistan in addition to providing many opportunities.

It would help harness untapped potential as despite the growth of Pakistan's textile recycling industry, significant

untapped market potential remains and by scaling recycling initiatives we could unlock economic and environmental benefits. Similarly, this project would target quality textile waste in addition to handling informal waste of textile sector. He said that a substantial amount of high-quality textile waste still ends up in low-value applications while high-end recyclers actively seek feedstock. The brands lack visibility into the fate of their discarded textiles. Similarly, the information waste handling sector faces numerous challenges due to critical link between textile waste supply and recycling destinations. Leakage within this sector poses a significant obstacle in supply chain compliance and transparent T2T recycling, he added.

He further said that both institutions would struggle to create a formalized structure for the demand and supply of textile waste by establishing a digitally verifiable trace.

Gold rates remain unchanged

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed no change and was sold at Rs.234,800 on Saturday.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold and 10 gram 22 karat gold also remained stagnant at Rs.201,303 and Rs.184,528 respectively, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver also witnessed no change and was traded at Rs.2,600 and Rs.2,211.93 respectively. The price of gold in the international market remained constant at \$2,254, the Association reported.

RTA slaps fines, recovers amount charged in excess fares by transporters

HYDERABAD (APP): The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) here on Saturday imposed fines and returned money to passengers who were charged excess fares by the transporters.



MULTAN: A vendor displaying seasonal fruit Mulberry to attract customers.

Incentives for taxpayers to help promote tax culture: FCCI chief

FAISALABAD (APP): President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) Dr Khurram Tariq has said that giving multiple incentives to major taxpayers would help promote tax culture in the country. In a statement issued here on Saturday, he appreciated the government's decision to issue blue passports and grant honorary ambassador's status to taxpayers as a positive step. "It will not only expand the tax base but also reduce the burden on

the existing taxpayers," he said and added that the decision would play a major role in improving overall economic health of the country. He also appreciated the decision to recognise taxpayers as national heroes and said that it would help Pakistan come out of the persistent economic crises. He said that honorary ambassadors would play their role in increasing exports with full dedication in addition to highlighting the soft image of Pakistan at the global level.



KARACHI: A worker prepares vermicelli's which is used in a traditional sweet dish popularly consumed during the holy month of Ramadan at a factory, in the Provincial Capital.

Israeli strikes kill 40 in Syria's Aleppo

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Israel carried out its deadliest strikes in months on northern Syria's Aleppo province. Israel has ramped up airstrikes in Syria against both the Lebanese Hezbollah militia and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in recent months. The Israeli military also claimed on Friday it had killed Ali Abed Akhsan Naim, deputy commander of Hezbollah's rocket and missile unit, in an airstrike in Lebanon. The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Israeli attack targeted an area "near rockets depots belonging to Lebanese group Hezbollah". "At least 36 soldiers were killed and dozens wounded," it said, adding that six Hezbollah fighters were also killed. However, Syria's defence ministry said Israeli strikes hit several areas in the southeastern part of Aleppo province around 1:45am (2245GMT on Thursday), killing civilians and military personnel. In a post on X, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said Israel's attacks on Syria were a "blatant and desperate attempt" to expand the war. Three security sources told Reuters that 33 Syrians and five Hezbollah fighters had been killed in the strikes. One of the Hezbollah fighters was a local field commander whose brother had been killed in an Israeli strike on southern Lebanon in November, one of the sources said. An Israeli strike on Friday killed a Hezbollah fighter, sources in Lebanon said. Moscow on Friday condemned what it said were "completely unacceptable" and provocative Israeli strikes on Syria. "Such aggressive actions against the Syrian Arab Republic, which constitute a flagrant violation of the country's sovereignty and the basic norms of international law, are categorically unacceptable," Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement.



A view of residential buildings damaged during a Russian missile strike in Kamianske, a city in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region.

Blackouts hit 3 Ukraine areas after Russian attack

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukraine imposed emergency blackouts on three regions after Russia fired dozens of missiles and drones at its power stations late night. Moscow has stepped up its aerial bombardment of Ukraine in recent weeks, targeting energy infrastructure in response to deadly Ukrainian assaults on Russia's border regions. National grid operator Ukrenergo said its dispatch centre was "forced to apply emergency blackout schedules in the regions of Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kirovograd until the evening". Restrictions were already in place in the major cities of Kharkiv and Kryvyi Rih following a Russian strike last week. "Consumers in other regions are asked to use electricity sparingly and consciously," Ukrenergo warned. The attacks come at a difficult time for Ukraine, which is facing critical shortages of air defences to protect its skies and ammunition to defend the front lines.

Malaysia arrests three suspected of supplying Israeli man with firearms

Monitoring Desk
KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian authorities have arrested three people suspected of supplying firearms to a 36-year-old man carrying an Israeli passport, who was detained this week at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur, police said on Saturday. The man, arrested with a bag containing six handguns and 200 bullets, had arrived at Kuala Lumpur International Airport from the United Arab Emirates on March 12 using what authorities believed to be a fake French passport.

Gaza fisherman braves Israeli navy fire to support his family

Monitoring Desk
GAZA: Before the Gaza war, Palestinian fisherman Jalal Qaraan navigated his small boat for long distances in search of a good catch. These days he says merely casting his nets could be deadly if he draws the wrath of the Israeli navy. Israeli airstrikes and shelling have reduced large swathes of the densely populated coastal Gaza Strip to rubble and killed more than 32,000 Palestinians as the war with the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas rages. There are also plenty of dangers at sea for fishermen like Qaraan, who must nevertheless support his family. "When we attempt to go out, we are besieged with gunfire, bombarded with shells, sound bombs. It's always a risk, when the water is a risk," he said as he pulled his boat to shore after catching a few fish. "There is not a day that goes by without them coming at us. It's all fear and terror, but despite this, I go in to be able to provide a secure living for my children."

Erdogan to visit US on May 9, security official says

Monitoring Desk
ANKARA: Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan will visit the United States on May 9, a Turkish security official said, setting the stage for his first White House meeting during the Biden Administration. The Washington visit would be Erdogan's first since 2019 when he met then-president Donald Trump, with whom he enjoyed good personal ties. Since President Joe Biden's 2020 election.



Japanese health ministry officials head to search a Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. factory in Osaka.

Central and Eastern European countries mark 20 years in NATO with focus on war in Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
VILNIUS: Several central and Eastern European countries began marking the 20th anniversary of the largest expansion of the NATO military alliance when formerly socialist countries became members of the bloc. Military aircraft roared over the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. At the main airbase hosting Spanish and Portuguese fighter jets tasked with NATO air policing missions in the Baltic region, officials gathered to commemorate the event. "Russia's new bloody terror in Europe is contributing to the growth of instability and threats around the world. However, we in Lithuania are calm because we know that we will never be alone again," said President Gitanas Nausėda, standing near the runway where the first NATO jets landed back in 2004. "We will always have a strong, supportive Alliance family by our side, and we will face any challenges together." Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined NATO on March 29 in 2004, bringing the total membership of the Alliance to 26. The seven nations started accession negotiations soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union and eventually were invited to join at the Prague Summit in November 2002. Another group of former Soviet satellites including Poland and the Czech Republic had been admitted several years earlier. Most of the former Soviet Republics that joined NATO at the turn of the millennium spend more than the required 2% of gross domestic product on defense.

Taiwan's navy chief to visit US next week, sources say

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Taiwan's navy chief, Tang Hua, will visit the United States from next week to attend a military ceremony and discuss how to boost bilateral naval cooperation as China raises threats toward the island, bringing the total membership of the Alliance to 26. The seven nations started accession negotiations soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union and eventually were invited to join at the Prague Summit in November 2002. Another group of former Soviet satellites including Poland and the Czech Republic had been admitted several years earlier. Most of the former Soviet Republics that joined NATO at the turn of the millennium spend more than the required 2% of gross domestic product on defense.

France to boost Olympics security with foreign military, police support

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: France has asked about 45 foreign countries to contribute several thousand extra military, police and civilian personnel to help safeguard the Paris Olympics this summer, government sources said, amid a complex geopolitical and security outlook. The country plans to deploy about 45,000 French police and security forces, 20,000 private security personnel and around 15,000 military each day to protect an event that will see millions of sports fans and tourists stay in the country for several weeks at the height of summer. Wars in Ukraine and the Middle East as well as a threat of terrorist attacks have forced the French government to raise its security alert to its highest level in recent days. "The security context, particularly in recent weeks, means that there is extreme vigilance regarding the security of these Olympic Games," said a French military official. It is not uncommon for international sporting events to see foreign police invited to help manage the large numbers of foreign visitors, but it is rarer to ask for military assistance. At the last soccer World Cup in Qatar, France did provide military support to the local authorities in the form of sniffer dogs and anti-drone personnel. According to a French government and an interior ministry source, a request was made in January to about 45 countries to help reinforce capacity with more than 2,000 people, both military and non-military.

Self-defence brigades sowing terror in Haiti, says UN report

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: Gang violence in Haiti has killed over 1,500 people so far this year, including many children, while dozens have been lynched, stoned or burned alive by so-called self-defence brigades, the UN human rights office said. Haiti's shattering gang wars have intensified in recent weeks with heavily armed rivals unleashing fresh waves of attacks, including raids on police stations and the international airport. Prime Minister Ariel Henry announced his resignation on March 11. "All these practices are outrageous and must stop at once," the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said in a statement released alongside a UN report describing the "cataclysmic" situation in the Caribbean country. The report documents 4,451 killings last year and 1,554 through to March 22 as violence has escalated. Some people have been killed in their homes in reprisal for their alleged support for the police or rival gangs. Others have been killed in the street by snipers or in crossfire, the UN report said.

Court extends Kejriwal's custody until April 1

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: An Indian court extended the custody of opposition leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal until April 1 on Thursday in a graft case related to the national capital territory's liquor policy, local media said. India's financial crime-fighting agency arrested Kejriwal last week in connection with corruption allegations related to the city's liquor policy and he was remanded to its custody.

Indian Navy rescues Iranian fishing vessel hijacked by pirates

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: The Indian Navy said it had freed a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel from nine armed pirates in the Arabian Sea, rescuing its crew unharmed. The fishing vessel, Al-Kambar 786, was south-west of the Yemeni island of Socotra on March 28 when it was reported to have been boarded by pirates, according to a statement from the navy late on Friday. The ship was intercepted by the INS Sumedha and INS Trishul, leading to "over 12 hours of intense coercive tactical measures" forcing the pirates to surrender, the navy said.

Biden warns Russia of 'costs' on journalist's arrest anniversary

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden said the US will impose costs for Russia's "appalling attempts" to use Americans as bargaining chips, "Biden added. The Kremlin said on Thursday complete silence was needed when it came to discussions about possible prisoner exchanges involving Gershkovich. The reporter, the Journal and the US government all deny he is a spy. The FSB, the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, said Gershkovich had been trying to obtain military secrets. He has now spent a year at Moscow's high-security Lefortovo prison, which is closely associated by the FSB, and his detention has been extended to June 30. "As I have told Evan's parents, I will never give up hope either. We will continue working every day to secure his release," Biden said in a statement released by the White House that called the journalist's detention "wholly unjust and illegal". "We will continue to denounce and impose costs for Russia's appalling attempts to use Americans as bargaining chips," Biden added.

Another US official quits after differences over Israel policy

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Annelise Sheline, the second US State Department official to resign over the Gaza conflict, cited her unwillingness to be associated with a government "enabling... genocide" in the Palestinian enclave. Her departure underscores mounting disillusionment with the Biden administration's Middle East policy, particularly as recent Gallup polls indicate a significant majority of Americans now oppose the conflict, with 55 per cent against and 36 per cent in favour. Sheline, a State Department official focusing on human rights in the Middle East, resigned on Wednesday in protest over US policy toward Israel, as she stated in interviews with CNN, NBC News, and other media outlets. Expressing her concerns, she cited the escalating death toll in Gaza, which had surpassed 32,000, and the looming threat of famine, saying she no longer wanted to be affiliated with a government that was "enabling what has credibly been described as genocide" in the Palestinian territories. She was referring to a recent report by Francesca P. Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, which stated there were "reasonable grounds to believe Israel has committed genocide in its war on Gaza." On Sunday, a Democratic lawmaker from New York, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, also defended her earlier remarks accusing Israel of genocide against the Palestinian people and advocating for cuts to US military aid until humanitarian relief flows freely in Gaza.

Venezuela's huge diaspora struggles to register to vote

Monitoring Desk
BUENOS AIRES: Millions of Venezuelans who fled economic misery in their country could find themselves unable to vote in key July presidential elections, as complaints mount over hurdles at consulates abroad for those seeking to register. "We want to vote, we want to vote!" chanted a small group of Venezuelans protesting outside their consulate in Argentina's capital in recent days, holding mock-ups of urns and ballot papers after being unable to sign up. Election registration was meant to start on March 18 and will run for a month, before the July 28 vote in which President Nicolas Maduro is seeking a third term. But in some countries in Latin America and Europe, the process hasn't even started yet. "Each consulate has its demands which they communicate verbally, there is nothing official... no uniform criteria" to register, said Venezuelan Adriana Flores outside the consulate in Buenos Aires. The United Nations estimates that almost eight million Venezuelans have fled their country since 2014 — the year after Maduro took office. The past decade has seen a severe economic crisis marked by runaway inflation and food and medicine shortages, plunging the population into misery. The Venezuelan civil rights NGO Sumate estimates that 5.2 million citizens abroad will have to register to vote for the first time or update their information from abroad. The last time the electoral register was updated was for the 2018 elections when only 107,000 Venezuelans signed up from abroad. In Colombia, which is home to 2.8 million Venezuelans, registration opened a week late, and no one has yet been able to sign up, said opposition figure Eduardo Battistini, who lives in the country.

9 detained in Tajikistan in relation to Moscow concert hall attack, Russian state media report

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Nine people have been detained by Tajikistan's state security service over suspected contact with the perpetrators of last week's attack by gunmen on a suburban Moscow concert hall that killed 144 people, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said. "Nine residents of the Vakhdat district were detained for contact with the persons who committed the terrorist attack at Crocus City Hall on March 22," the agency reported, citing information from an unnamed source in Tajikistan's special services, who said that Russian security forces were also involved in the operation to detain the suspects. Those detained are also suspected of having connections with the Islamic State group, according to RIA Novosti. Russia's Investigative Committee said Thursday it had detained another suspect in relation to the raid on Crocus City Hall, on suspicion of being involved in financing the attack. It did not give further details of the suspect's identity or alleged actions. Russian officials previously said that 11 suspects had been arrested, including four who allegedly carried out the attack. Those four, identified as Tajik nationals, appeared in a Moscow court on Sunday on terrorism charges and showed signs of severe beatings. One appeared to be barely conscious during the hearing. The Investigative Committee statement said it has "confirmed data that the perpetrators of the terrorist attack received significant amounts of money and cryptocurrency from Ukraine, which were used in preparing the crime." Ukraine denies involvement and its officials claim that Moscow is pushing the allegation as a pretext to intensify its fighting in Ukraine.



First responders work at the site of a deadly bus crash along the R518 in Waterberg District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Dengue is sweeping through the Americas early this year

Monitoring Desk
SAN JUAN: Dengue is surging across the Americas early this year from Puerto Rico to Brazil, with 3.5 million cases of the tropical disease reported so far, health officials said Thursday. That tally is three times the number of cases reported at this point last year, said Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, director of the Pan American Health Organization, the regional office of the World Health Organization in the Americas. Last year, there were a record 4.5 million cases in the region, and PAHO officials said they expect this year will set a new record. Usually dengue spikes during the wet season, which is still months away. And some areas are reporting dengue for the first time, officials said. The dengue virus is spread to people when they are bitten by infected mosquitoes. Driving the surge are rising temperatures, rapid urbanization, droughts and floods linked

Pakistan wants to further enhance bilateral coop. with Russia: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday while noting the historic cordial ties between Pakistan and Russia, said that Pakistan wanted to enhance bilateral cooperation with Russia in a number of areas particularly in energy, trade and investment.

The prime minister expressed deep condolences on the loss of precious lives in the Crocus City Hall attack outside Moscow last week and said

Pakistan stood in solidarity with Russia at this tragic hour.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of the Russian Federation Albert P. Khorev who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister stressed the need for early convening of the 9th session of the Inter-governmental Commission (IGC), due to be hosted by Russia later this year.

He also urged the Russian side to send a delegation to Pakistan to hold discussions with their counterparts to identify ways to enhance the existing level of trade and investment ties between the two countries.

While fondly recalling their meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Samarkand in 2022, the prime minister reiterated his invitation to President Putin to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience.

He also thanked President Vladimir Putin for the congratulatory message sent to him on his re-election.

The Russian ambassador assured the prime minister that Russia wanted to build stronger ties with Pakistan and said that, in addition to energy, trade and investment, Russia was also keen to enhance cooperation in education and culture.

Both countries are also actively involved in SCO.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Russian Federation Amb. Albert P. Khorev calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.



QUETTA: PPP leader Malik Hameed Kakar and others in a group photo with newly elected Senator of PPP Sardar Umar Gorgaj.

US President's letter emphasizes bilateral ties, not congratulations

PESHAWAR (INP): Farhatullah Babar, a prominent leader of the Pakistan People's Party, has highlighted an intriguing aspect of the letter penned by US President Joe Biden to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. According to Babar, President Biden's letter did not include explicit congratulations to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on assuming office.

Taking on Twitter (X), Babar expressed concern over this omission, suggesting it conveys a subtle yet disconcerting message. He questioned the reasons behind this oversight, prompting speculation among observers.

HRCP takes notice of Maria murder case

TOBA TEK SINGH (INP): The National Commission of Human Rights (NCHR) on Saturday took notice of the gruesome murder of Maria Bibi, who was choked to death by her brother.

According to the details, the NCHR in a statement reacted swiftly to the murder case, promptly assuming the role of a party in the proceedings.

Muhammad Khalid, the Coordinator of NCHR Punjab, took a proactive approach by personally visiting the scene of the incident in Toba Tek Singh.

During his visit, Khalid diligently recorded statements from residents regarding the murder incident.

Rally in Muzaffarabad to express solidarity with Palestinians, Kashmiris

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): A "Solidarity Palestine and Jammu Kashmir Rally" was organized in Muzaffarabad under the auspices of the refugees of Jammu and Kashmir, in which they demanded the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the right to self-determination for the Kashmiri people.

The rally started from the Old Secretariat and ended at Burhan Wani Shaheed Chowk. The participants of the rally chanted anti-Israel and pro-Palestine and anti-India and pro-freedom slogans.

The speakers denounced the massacre of innocent civilians in Palestine and demanded the

Pervaiz welcomes Aseefa to NA

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Central Punjab President and former Speaker of the National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has welcomed Aseefa Bhutto Zardari to the National Assembly. In a statement issued here on Saturday, he said that Aseefa Bhutto Zardari's uncontested victory is a beauty of democracy. Congratulating her on being elected as a Member of the National Assembly under Article 207.

Zulfi withdraws senate candidacy, puts party first

ATTOCK (INP): In a surprising turn of events, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Zulfi Bukhari has withdrawn his candidacy for the upcoming Senate elections. This decision comes amidst legal challenges surrounding the confirmation of his nomination papers.

Bukhari alleged that his nomination faced "false and illegal hurdles," despite possessing the necessary legal documentation. While his lawyer, Salman Akram Raja, expressed confidence in a legal victory, Bukhari grappled with the potential consequences of contesting the confirmations of his fellow PTI nominees, Allama Raja Nasir Abbas and Hamid Khan.



QUETTA: Heavy machinery removes garbage at garbage dump during cleanliness drive under the supervision of Metropolitan Corporation, at Nawwan Kali in Quetta.

QMC to plant olive trees on PPP basis to address environmental issues

QUETTA (APP): Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) has decided to plant olive trees on public-private partnership basis to reduce pollution, address environmental issues and boost the green cover in the provincial capital.

Talking to APP, Administrator Quetta Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat said that state land would be allocated on lease to private firms for olive trees plantation at various sites specified in Quetta.

According to the plan, resource management tasks such as silviculture, inventories, planning, reforestation, monitoring and harvesting of crops would be carried out by the private sector.

He said the tree plantation would generate direct and indirect socioeconomic, ecological and environmental benefits for the local people.

The initiative would also help to keep the land of Quetta free from illegal encroachments and constructions, and to make the environment more beautiful and attractive.

The Quetta administration has also plan to establish 'Miyawaki forest' at different places of the city to reduce city's increasing temperature.

He said, the aggressive plantation would help in controlling the growing environmental pollution and it will also be useful for boosting oxygen level in the atmosphere.

He said that the civic authority would enhance forestation through such unique techniques.

The administrator said available resources would be utilized to protect the natural resources which were necessary for preserving green environment.

Hamza Shaqat emphasized the need of formation of Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) in the province to add greenery and preserve provincial horticulture.

He said more efforts are needed to maintain and renovate the public parks on the modern lines in a bid to provide a recreational opportunity to its residents.

Finance Minister assures Sindh govt of full support to boost agriculture sector

KARACHI (INP): Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb and Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah have agreed to collaborate to attract foreign investment and boost exports, enhancing the financial stability of the province in general and of the country in particular.

The chief minister also said that the FBR after reading a news item of the cars registered in Sindh from 1948 to 2015 had deducted Rs6 billion of the province at source. Despite the resolution of the issue still the amount has not been refunded.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told the chief minister that he was working to develop a proper professional working relationship between the federal and provincial organizations.

"The federal and provincial organizations and institutions have to work together, learn from each other's expertise, support each other for growth and cooperate for collective uplift and development," he said.

He assured the chief minister that the at-source deduction issue would be resolved amicably. The CM and the federal finance minister also discussed the price escalation of industrial gas. The chief minister said that the industrialists were quite upset with the increase in industrial gas prices.

Sherry demands exemplary punishment for girl's killers

HYDERABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader and Senator Sherry Rehman has condemned the brutal murder of 22-year-old Toba Tek Singh girl Maria allegedly by her brother and father. In her statement, Senator Sherry Rehman said she was heartbroken to hear about the heinous and inhumane act of killing an innocent woman.

"The murder of Maria by her brother and father is a violation of basic human rights and our traditions," she said.

She said the video circulating on social media had made everyone hang head in shame.

"It should not be considered a normal incident and its terrible nature should not be neglected. Instead, a transparent investigation into this murder should be held to punish all those involved," she demanded. Rehman added that everyone was feeling sad for Maria and all the victims of such atrocities.



The first consignment of high breed cattle imported from Brazil under Special Investment Council (SIFC) reaches Pakistan.

Murad Saeed allowed to contest Senate election, tribunal issues verdict

PESHAWAR (INP): Nomination papers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former federal minister Murad Saeed have been approved. The Appellate Tribunal has issued a written verdict in this regard.

The tribunal rejected all the eight objections against the PTI leader. The tribunal, in its verdict, said the signatures of the attester and endorser on the papers were genuine.

Murad Saeed has deposited the penalty amount imposed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). In the written ruling, it was said that absconders had the right to contest the elections. "Papers cannot be rejected on the basis of absconding. The tribunal said Murad Saeed had also revealed his assets. The verdict said documents were submitted by Murad Saeed through power of attorney which are correct.

Bilawal extends warm Easter greeting to Christian community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended warm Easter greetings to the Christian community across the world, including Pakistan, emphasizing the importance of peaceful coexistence globally. According to the press release issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, he said that the Easter, with its profound message of hope, and renewal holds significant importance not only in the spiritual realm but also in the political landscape. Bilawal Bhutto expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the unwavering patriotism of Pakistan's Christian community on this auspicious occasion, acknowledging their invaluable contributions to education and healthcare.



QUETTA: MS Civil Hospital Quetta Dr. Ishaq Panezai presiding over a meeting of Balochistan Health Utilization Committee.

Denying medical treatment to a patient Private hospital removed from panel of Health Card

QUETTA: A famous private hospital of Quetta has been removed from the panel of Health Card on denying medical treatment to a patient on Health Card.

The meeting of Health Card Utilization Committee was held under the chair of Medical Superintendent of Sandeman Civil Hospital Quetta Dr. Ishaq Panezai on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by Professor Dr. Uzma Sohail, Professor Dr. Abdul Ghaffar, Associate Professor Dr. Fazalur Rehman, Assistant Professor Dr. Asmat Achakzai, Director Admin Balochistan Health Card, Dr. Ahmed Wali and other concerned. The meeting discussed about the issues being created in facilitation of the Health Card Programme. The meeting stressed the need to remove the hurdles in provision of Health Card facility.



QUETTA: Members of Traders and Shopkeepers Alliance are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, held at Bacha Khan Chowk in Quetta.

JAC of UoB announces to stage dharna on April 2 in front of BA

QUETTA: The Joint Action Committee (JAC) of University of Balochistan (UoB) has announced to stage dharna (protest sit-in) in front of the Provincial Assembly on April 2, 2024.

According to the Joint Action Committee, the teachers, officers and employees of the University are deprived of the salaries for last three months.

It was mentioned that the Provincial government has released Rs. 25 crore and 50 lakh on account of the salaries of employees. It was stated that Rs. 1.25 billion is required for salaries and pension of the employees and pensioners of the university.

The JAC demanded of the authorities to ensure payment of the salaries and pensions of the employees and pensioners of the university immediately.

Otherwise, strong protest would be lodged against the issue, it was announced.

Rain, hailstorm hit parts of Balochistan, KP, Punjab cities

QUETTA (INP): Different places in the country were lashed by rain and hailstorms on Saturday morning, bringing down the temperatures and bringing smiles on people's faces in the holy month of Ramadan.

Different parts of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Punjab received rain which not only turned the weather cooler but also created a flood-like situation in cities like Peshawar, the capital of KP, prompting the provincial Chief Minister (CM) Ali Amin Gandapur to direct the PDMA and the rescue personnel to remain prepared to deal with any eventuality. "All resources should be utilized to cope with any untoward incident, he stressed, adding that timely assistance and relief should be ensured.

"Necessary measures should be taken to open the roads which may be closed due to rains and snowfall and availability of small and large machinery and manpower should be ensured," the CM directed. The situation was same in Balochistan where rain and hailstorms pounded the provincial capital Quetta and other cities, again turning the weather chilly in these areas.

Neelum Jhelum HPP achieves peak generation of 969MW

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a significant achievement, the Neelum Jhelum Hydroelectric Project (NJHPP) reached its peak generation capacity of 969 MW.

This milestone comes after the project resumed full operation earlier this month, following the successful inspection and remedial works in the tail race tunnel (TRT). Gwadar Pro reported on Saturday.

Before the resumption, an international panel of experts inspected the TRT and described the rehabilitation work carried out by China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) as "satisfactory".

NJHPP is continuously in operation as per the availability of water and contributing electricity to the National Grid, especially during Sehri and Iftar of the holy month of Ramadan, according to an official statement of WAPDA issued on Friday.

The operation of NJHPP was halted on January 10, 2024 for the inspection of the rehabilitated TRT. The detailed inspection was successfully carried out prior to the resumption of generation from the project early this month. Neelum Jhelum is a unique hydropower project with 90% being underground under high mountains overburden.

The project, completed in 2018 on River Neelum in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, comprises a Dam at Nauseri, an underground waterway system consisting of 52-Km long tunnels and an underground powerhouse at Chattar Kalas with four power generating units of 242.25 MW each.

With an average annual energy generation of 4.6 billion units, NJHPP has so far generated 19.562 billion units of green and clean electricity, thus significantly contributing to meeting the electricity requirements of the country.