

Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

www.dailyindependent.com.pk

Hub

Ph: 2841470/2841473 Vol: XIX No. 76, Shawwal 14, 1445 AH Tuesday April 23, 2024, Pages 04, Price Rs.15

Joint presser

Pak, Iran for promoting bilateral trade ties, business activities at border areas

Agree on joint efforts to eradicate terrorism, promote cooperation in diverse fields; Both countries agree increasing trade volume to \$10bn; Raisi arrives in Islamabad today on 3-day visit; visiting dignitary presented guard of honour after premier receives him at PM House; Iranian president will also visit Lahore and Karachi;

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday agreed to enhance bilateral trade ties and promote business activities at the border areas to ensure development and prosperity of the people of two countries.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, in a press talk along with President of Iran Dr Ebrahim Raisi after witnessing the signing of bilateral agreements and MoUs at the PM House, said under the leadership of the Iranian President, the two countries could bring development and prosperity in their respective sides by turning their borders into hub of business activities.

He said during their meeting, the two sides held detailed discussions on various fields of mutual interests including economy, trade, investment, diplomacy, security and culture.

The Iranian President, who arrived here on Monday on three-day official visit to Pakistan along with a high-powered delegation, said that the trade volume between the two brotherly countries was not below the existing potential and they wanted to increase the volume to US \$10 billion annually.

He stressed that steps were needed to enhance border markets to give spur to the business and trade activities at the border areas, besides enhancing security.

He said that the two countries shared common affinities and no one could separate them, adding the two sides in their meetings, decided to further promote the bilateral ties between the two countries in trade and economic sectors.

President Dr Raisi said that there were a number of common issues including fight against terrorism, efforts to curb organized crimes and smuggling, in which the two sides could enhance their cooperation.

The president stressed that it was significant to further broaden the bilateral ties for the benefits of the two countries, besides continuity of cooperation at the highest level.

He said that the his-

toric and durable ties between Iran and Pakistan provided them opportunity to fully utilize them for the welfare and prosperity of the two nations.

President Raisi said that Iran had achieved immense progress in science and technology and the country was ready to share their experiences and knowledge.

President of Iran Dr Ebrahim Raisi, conveying best regards from the people and the Supreme Leader of Iran to the people of Pakistan, said they had always been supporting the oppressed people of various areas of the world, specially the people of Gaza and had always been defending Islam and raising their voice for the freedom of Quds Al-Sharif.

He believed that today people in different parts of the world were in pain due to current situation in Palestine. At the same time, he said the international organization such as United Nations and UN Security Council who claimed to support human rights, could not perform their core responsibility. President Raisi emphasized that the people belonging to all religions across the world including that of Iran and Pakistan, were calling for an end to the oppression and barbarism against the people of Palestine.

The Iranian President believed that the position adopted by the people around the world and by the Palestinian resistance would surely be realized one day.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with Iranian President H.E. Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi.

Zia urges masses to back institutions for restoration of peace in Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove has urged the masses to back their institutions for restoration of peace in the province.

The Minister said that he can't see the people being killed anymore, therefore, we have to strengthen the institutions now.

Mir Ziaullah Langove was chairing the meeting held to review the security measures here on Monday.

The Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem briefed the meeting about security measures.

The meeting focused on how to tackle the security issues besides improving security in the province. The meeting also re-

viewed the targeted attacks on the security forces.

Besides, the strategy of zero tolerance against terrorism, law and order situation and anti-smuggling activities were also reviewed.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Home said that no negligence would be tolerated in the mandate given by the masses.

He said that there are clear directives of the Chief Minister that no negligence would be tolerated in maintaining law and order.

He said that law and order is priority of the government.

He stressed the need to maintain better coordination between police and levies forces to maintain peace. He also stressed to

strengthen local intelligence network for information sharing.

He asserted that the action would be taken against the concerned high ups of area where incidents of terrorism would occur.

He directed to take legal action against the display of arms in Quetta.

He said that terrorism would be uprooted from the province.

He also stressed that it is necessary to eliminate corruption from the security forces.

He said that action would be taken against any personal involved in corruption.

The Minister also directed to ensure enforcement of biometric system in all the institutions.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and the Iranian President, Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, held a meeting, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Reiterate call for immediate ceasefire PM, President Raisi condemn Israel's indiscriminate use of force in Gaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Iranian President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi on Monday expressed strong and unequivocal condemnation of the indiscriminate use of force by Israeli occupation authorities in Gaza for over seven months.

They reiterated the call for international efforts to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, lifting the siege and provision of humanitarian relief to the people of Gaza.

The two leaders, in a meeting, discussed the entire range of bilateral relations and exchanged views on important regional and global developments, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Underscoring the rich history of relations between Pakistan and Iran, they also reaffirmed commitment to expand wide-ranging bilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of trade, energy, connectivity, culture and people-to-people contacts.

Ministers and senior officials from both sides were present in the meeting.

Both sides agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade to US \$10 billions in the next five years.

They also agreed to cooperate in developing joint approaches to confront common challenges including the threat of terrorism.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Dr. Ahmad Vahidi and Iran's Justice Minister Amin Hosein Rahimi.

Eleven terrorists killed in two separate operations in KP

RAWALPINDI (APP): The security forces have killed some eleven terrorists in two separate operations conducted on April 21-22 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release issued on Monday, an intelligence-based operation was launched in Dera Ismail Khan (D.I.Khan), district on reported presence of terrorists.

During the operation, and after an intense fire exchange, ten terrorists were killed.

In another encounter that held in North

Waziristan district, the Army troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location as a result of which one more terrorist was sent to hell.

The terrorists were found involved in numerous criminal activities in the area against security forces as well as the innocent civilians. Arms and ammunition were also recovered after the operation.

"Locals of the area appreciated the operations conducted by the Security Forces, who are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from this country," the ISPR said.

PM welcomes Iranian President in Persian language

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday welcomed Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi in the Persian language.

During their joint press stakeout, the prime minister recited Allama Taqi Bahar's Persian verses about Pakistan, in which the poet had invoked divine blessings for the country, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister, on the occasion, read out a Persian couplet for the visiting President which warmly welcomed his arrival in Pakistan.

The prime minister's eloquence in the Persian language brought smiles on the faces of the Iranian President and other participants who were pleased to hear such remarks.

They also applauded the prime minister's gesture.

Rahila Durrani calls on acting Speaker BA

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Education, Ms Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani called on the Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Ms Ghazala Gola at her chamber here on Monday.

During the course of meeting, different matters about the functioning of Assembly and others of mutual interests were discussed.

They also discussed the matters about women empowerment in the province.



QUETTA: Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Lango presiding over a meeting regarding law and order situation in the province

Zardari, Raisi pledge to strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday reiterated the resolve to further broaden mutually beneficial cooperation in various areas of common interest.

Both sides underscored the need for operationalizing bilateral trade mechanisms to boost the volume of trade up to \$10 billion, and also urged the need to work together to overcome the challenges being faced by the region.

This was discussed between President Asif Ali Zardari and visiting Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi during a meeting held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The two leaders also discussed key regional and global developments, particularly the situation in the Middle East.

President Zardari expressed deep concern over the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza and strongly condemned

Israel's military aggression against its people of Gaza that had resulted in the killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians. He said that Pakistan would consistently and unequivocally support the Palestinian cause.

Both the presidents reiterated the need for enhanced international endeavours to bring an end to the Israeli suppression of the Gaza people, and for enhanced humanitarian relief and assistance. President Zardari said that Pakistan and Iran enjoyed close fraternal ties based on shared religion, culture, and history, which needed to be further strengthened for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries.

He thanked Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi for being the first Head of State to visit Pakistan after the general elections, which reflected his deep personal commitment to Pakistan.

Government announces to launch air ambulance service in Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has announced to launch air ambulance in the province.

According to the official handout issued here on Monday, the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti said that the provincial government has decided to initiate the air ambulance for the first time in history of the province.

The Chief Minister said that the Peoples air ambulance would be available for shifting of the patients on an emergency basis.

He said that the provincial government decided to use the airplane for public instead of selling it.

He said that one of the

two planes would be converted into air ambulance.

He said that no additional resources are required for launching the air ambulance in the province rather the available resources are being utilized for the purpose.

The Chief Minister said that service delivery is being improved in all sectors including health services in the province.

He said that the desired results can be achieved by changing the priorities of decision making in the province.

He said that reforms are being brought in the health sector to bring improvement in the service delivery.

Younas Zehri declared as Leader of Opposition in BA

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Member of Provincial Assembly, Mir Younas Aziz Zehri has been declared as Leader of Opposition in Balochistan Assembly with immediate effect and until further orders.

This was announced in an official notification issued here by the Provincial Assembly's secretariat on Monday. According to the

notification, the acting Speaker of Provincial Assembly, Ms Ghazala Gola declared Mir Younas Aziz Zehri as Leader of Opposition in pursuance of Rule 19-C of the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan, Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business 1974.

It may be mentioned here that Mir Younas Aziz Zehri belongs to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI).

Pakistan, Iran agree to ban terrorist organizations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday decided in principle to ban terrorist organizations in their respective countries.

The decision to the effect was taken in a meeting between Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, and his Iranian counterpart Dr Ahmad Vahidi and Law Minister Amin Hussain Rahimi.

The two sides agreed on a joint plan of action to deal with the menace of terrorism being a common problem, with further improving mutual support and exchange of intelligence information. It was decided to sign a security agreement in that regard at the earliest.

It was also decided to provide all possible facilities to the Pakistani pilgrims on the occasion of Arba'een. The Iranian Interior Minister extended an invitation to his Pakistani counterpart to visit Iran in that regard where the Iraqi counterpart would also be invited.

The two sides observed that joint initiatives would help ensure the provision of best facilities to the pilgrims.

CJP gives indication to change the period of filing appeal in SC

KARACHI (Online): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has given indication to change the period of filing appeal in Supreme Court (SC).

The CJP remarked don't make fun of the court. The application for adjournment is given repeatedly.

During the hearing of 15 years old case the CJP got annoyed.

The CJP sought opinion from senior lawyers in the matter of change of period in the case of ownership of plot against the citizen in SC Karachi registry.

The CJP inquired during hearing of plot dispute case what should be time limit for appeals against the decisions of high courts.

The lawyers replied decision of five members bench of SC is there regarding period of appeal.

Farogh Nasim said decision of 5-member bench is limited. You will have to

review it afresh.

During the hearing of the case barrister Salah ud Din Farogh Nasim, Khalid Javed and others said to review the matter administratively.

The CJP remarked ok we see this matter. This will be solved administratively or on judicial side.

Earlier the CJP expressed annoyance over seeking time by counsel for city government during the hearing of case in Karachi registry.

SC has summoned mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab immediately.

Secretary local government has also been directed to appear forthwith.

The CJP remarked during the hearing of the case that you people have made fun of the court. Run the case if you file it.

The CJP remarked the case has been filed since the last 15 years. Why do you not run it.

PML-N clinches landslide victory in by-election

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: The ruling PML-N on Monday emerged victorious in by-elections held on 21 national and provincial seats, according to provisional results released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

On Sunday, by-polls were held across the country amid allegations of "record rigging", temporary suspension of cellular ser-

vices in specific districts of Punjab and Balochistan and multiple incidents of violence, leading to the death of a PML-N supporter in a clash outside a Narowal polling station. By-elections were held on five NA seats, including two from Punjab, two from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one from Sindh. Further, 12 provincial seats were also up for grabs in Punjab as well as two each in KP and Balochistan.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Not without reform

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb says that the economy has the potential to grow 10 times its size to \$3tr for Pakistan to become a high-middle-income country by 2047. That kind of growth or economic transformation is difficult to achieve but not impossible.

India accomplished this feat to become the world's fifth-largest economy by increasing its GDP size from less than \$275bn to over \$3.7tr in 30 years after it began to implement reforms in earnest to overcome a severe crisis resulting from external debt. Ever since then, it has not returned to the IMF for help and is now well on its way to becoming the world's third-largest economy after the US and China. The latter country has grown at a very high annual rate of 10pc for decades to transform itself into the world's second-largest economy and rescue millions of its citizens from poverty.

There are also examples of countries from Southeast Asia, which were poorer and less developed than us a few decades ago but have surged far ahead now. Even if these economies have not fully overcome poverty or become high-middle-income nations, their examples show us the road to better days. But, living on borrowed money as we are, the periodic articulation of a desire to grow rich will not help.

If Pakistan is desirous of becoming a middle-income economy and halting the perennial cyclical crisis that has led Mr Aurangzeb to Washington to seek the country's 24th bailout from the IMF, it must follow the path others have successfully taken. It has to honestly and diligently implement reforms to limit the role of government in the economy, encourage the private sector to lead growth, and integrate the economy with the region and global economy by breaking down barriers to trade and investment.

These reforms, however, will have to be based on enduring fiscal stabilisation policies. A similar message was conveyed by IMF's Middle East and Central Asia director Jihad Azour the other day when he emphasised that giving precedence to reforms to revive the Pakistani economy was more important than the loan amount being negotiated. "What is important at this stage is to accelerate the reforms, double down on the structure of reforms in order to provide Pakistan with its full potential of growth," he said.

The problem with us is that our ruling elite is still trying to find a way around the tough reforms that will hit their privileges. The creation of SIFC as an island of facilitation for certain foreign or local investors is one example of this attitude. But it will be difficult to carry on like this. With geopolitical rent becoming more and more difficult to draw, a debt-ridden country cannot daydream its way into becoming a middle-income economy.

Anwar Kashif Mumtaz

In December 2023, Pakistan's tax revenue reached \$17.079 billion, marking a significant increase from the previous figure of \$7.622bn reported in September 2023. Tax revenue data for Pakistan is updated on a quarterly basis, with an average of \$10.565bn recorded from September 2000 to December 2023, spanning 94 observations.

What is even more significant is that only 2.74 million individuals in Pakistan file personal income tax, representing merely 4.1 per cent of the labour force and 1.3pc of the total population. It is pertinent to mention that 35pc of these individual filers are exempt from paying income tax as their income falls below the taxable threshold, resulting in zero tax liability for the year. Between 2008 and 2021, Pakistan's federal government collected between 36pc to 39pc of its tax revenue from direct taxes, while the rest came from indirect taxes.

Expanding the tax net, equitable tax, restructuring the tax brackets, etc, have been part of conversations, but that is where such actions have stopped. We are still challenged by the small community of taxpayers, overburdened salaried class and large fields of agriculture and real estate being exempted. We have the super-impressive examples of Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea — economies that have risen on the basis of solid monetary policies, with far fewer resources.

Tax audits in Pakistan have long been associated with compromise, connivance, and rampant corruption. This pervasive culture not only undermines the integrity of the tax system but also perpetuates tax evasion, depriving the

Tax with AI

government of much-needed revenue. The discretionary powers wielded by tax officers further exacerbate the problem, raising concerns about their potential for abuse. The complexity of tax laws often hampers the effective enforcement of tax regulations, allowing for loopholes to be exploited.

Pakistan's population number goes in its favour. Imagine crowd-funding by 240m people. Imagine 50pc of the population paying taxes — Pakistan becomes the golden goose. This argument compels us to look for the quickest, and most effective transformation solution that can restore faith in the tax system and ensure compliance with the law — artificial intelligence (AI), a game changer in the realm of tax audits.

AI is not a mechanical way replacing human error, but a made-to-order algorithm that can cater to and adapt to all local frameworks with optimisation of service, transparency, and above all, accessibility. Smartphone penetration which is currently around 31pc needs to be supported to take it up to 100pc and then to use that platform for reaching out to the banked and unbanked, documented and undocumented, in order to bring them on board.

Unlike human auditors, AI operates without bias or influence. It adheres strictly to the provisions of the tax code, without succumbing to external pressures or considerations. By leveraging advanced algorithms and data analytics, AI can efficiently analyse vast amounts of financial data, identifying patterns and anomalies indicative of potential tax evasion. This analytical prowess not only enhances the effectiveness of audits but also serves as a

powerful deterrent against non-compliance.

AI-driven audits prioritise transparency and accountability. Every decision made by the AI system is based on objective criteria, devoid of any subjective judgement or favouritism. This not only minimises the risk of corruption but also ensures fair and equitable treatment for all taxpayers.

Moreover, AI facilitates the simplification of tax laws by streamlining complex regulations into easily understandable guidelines. This not only reduces ambiguity but also empowers taxpayers to fulfil their obligations with confidence and clarity. Critically, AI-driven audits shift the focus from mere revenue generation to long-term deterrence of tax evasion. By identifying irregularities and enforcing compliance, AI helps create a culture of accountability and integrity within the tax system.

Additionally, AI improves data management by automating data ingestion, extraction, and organisation, facilitating a 'no-touch tax return' concept, and enhancing audit processes.

This is the only route for us towards equitable taxation in Pakistan. With the right mechanics, we can investigate the integration of AI into tax audits for the much-needed paradigm shift. By eliminating the spectre of compromise and connivance, tax revenue can be enhanced in selected fields. AI can expand the tax net, instil trust and confidence in the tax system and foster a conducive environment for economic growth and development. As we embrace the transformative potential of AI, we pave the way for a fairer, more efficient, and more equitable tax regime for all. -- Courtesy Dawn

The aging empire

Zarrar Khuhro

It's doublespeak that would have George Orwell slit his wrists with a sharpened quill: right after casting a veto against a draft resolution that recommended granting the state of Palestine full membership in the UN, the US ambassador said: "This vote does not reflect opposing to Palestinian statehood." If we are to actually believe the words coming out of the envoy's mouth it would mean that America just voted 'no' on something it claims to strongly support.

The US vetoes anything that goes against Israeli interests, interests which it values more than its diplomatic standing, global stability, or even the welfare of its own citizens. Since 1945, it has used its veto to block 34 draft resolutions to protect Israel, with most of them calling for Israel to respect international laws or condemning it for displacing Palestinians and building settlements in occupied territories.

The US also used its veto to block 46 resolutions on Israel. The first instance was in 1972 when it vetoed a resolution regarding Israeli air raids in Syria and Lebanon. Interestingly, this was the second-ever use of the veto by the US with the first being in 1970 to protect Britain from condemnation for not using force to overthrow the white supremacist regime of Rhodesia. Funny how history always comes more or less full circle.

Meanwhile, the US House of Representatives voted in a resolution condemning the chant 'from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free', as antisemitic and presumably a call for genocide, all the while funding and supporting an actual genocide in Gaza.

Speaking of antisemitism, the US Congress also con-

ducted a hearing about how the hallowed halls of Columbia University have become hotbeds of hatred. Congressmen and women lined up to prove their allegiance to Israel by grilling the university administration on the measures taken to tackle antisemitism on campus. Representative Rick Allen, in a fascinating display of the brain rot that Christian Zionism can cause, quoted Bible verses from Genesis 12:3, "If you bless Israel, I will bless you. If you curse Israel, I will curse you", before asking the Columbia president if she wanted her university to "be cursed by God".

It was a bit much given that Columbia has gone out of its way to support Zionist students and staff, while clamping down on pro-Palestinian voices. In a move that had it taken place in any other country would have invited immediate condemnation from the US, Columbia suspended protesting students en masse and had them arrested by the NYPD. The suspended students included the daughter of US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, just a day after Omar had questioned the Columbia administration about its treatment of pro-Palestinian voices. With every such action, the number of Americans opposed to Israel only grows.

Disquiet is increasing in Israel itself since the myth of Israeli invincibility was shattered first by Hamas and now by Iran. After Oct 7, the assurance that Israelis felt about being secure and separate from the Palestinians, caged as they were behind heavily guarded walls, brutalised as they were by a highly armed military, surveilled as they were by an infallible intelligence apparatus

aided by the most cutting-edge technology available, all vanished like mist in the breeze.

With Iran's retaliation, the confidence Israelis had in the impermeability of their air defences which, in their imagination, allowed them to strike outwards with impunity and with no fear of payback, has also been punctured.

Israel claims to have intercepted the majority of the drones and missiles fired from Iran, but the fact is that most of these were intercepted by the US, UK, France and Jordan. Israel also points to the relatively little damage caused by the strikes as evidence of failure, but the very fact that the Nevatim airbase, from which the US-supplied F-35 jets operate, was hit several times should come as a shock to the Zionist regime, given that this is, without doubt, the most highly defended military base in all of Israel. Not only is the best of Israel's air defence deployed here, the base is also home to an US-supplied radar system as the TYP 2 X-band radar system, which is arguably the most advanced radar system the US has in its arsenal.

Less publicised were the drone attacks Hezbollah carried out on Israel during this time, penetrating deep into northern Israel and wounding dozens of Israeli soldiers, thus delivering the message that in any serious confrontation, it would rain down fire on large parts of Israel. Perhaps this is why the Israeli riposte to Iran has so far been unimpressive, but no one should bet on Israel to show any restraint given the psychotic nature of its ruling class, military and public, and given that a decadent and decrepit empire will support them to the bitter end. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Pak backs UN's FAO in forming a facility to ensure food security

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has told the just-concluded UN Economic and Social (ECOSOC) Youth Forum that it supports the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in creating a facility with broader and people-centric criteria to further strengthen its efforts to defeat hunger, improve nutrition and food security in the developing countries. "We have considerable potential in the agriculture sector and could play an important role in building the global food supply chains," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan,

said at the forum attended by over 1,000 youth leaders and activists from around the world. At the same time, he extended Pakistan's support to the UN Secretary-General's call for urgent reform of the global financial system, notably how to approach debt relief on behalf of the billions of distressed citizens living in the developing world, saying it was critical for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2) to end world hunger.

Ambassador Jadoon also underscored the need for concerted international

efforts to establish resilient and sustainable food systems that can withstand shocks and disruptions in light of the increasing vulnerability of global food systems to a multitude of challenges.

He warned that the world was facing a convergence of crises, from conflicts to climate change, and from supply chain disruptions to economic contractions, which posed significant threats to the ability of existing food systems to provide nutritious, safe, and affordable diets for all.

The Pakistani envoy said that as the fifth most populous

country in the world with a significant youthful population, Pakistan recognized the critical importance of safeguarding food systems for future generations. Agriculture, he said, was the backbone of the country's economy, contributing substantially to its GDP and employing a significant portion of its labour force. Ambassador Usman Jadoon referred to Pakistan's 2022 devastating floods, which destroyed 4.4 million acres of standing crops, and said that the catastrophe led to a stark realization of the extreme vulnerability of food systems.



DUBAI: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in a Meeting with Senior Officials of Mashreq Bank and First Abu Dhabi Bank.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson BISP, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib witnessed MoU signing ceremony between BISP and NAVTTC to extend access to technical and vocational education to members of BISP beneficiary families at BISP HQs on 22nd April 2024. Ms. Saira Atta, Director General (CI) from BISP and Mr. Shafiq Khokhar, Director General (P&D) from NAVTTC formally signed the agreement.

Chairman NTC seeks budget proposals from KCCI

KARACHI (APP): Chairman National Tariff Commission (NTC) Naem Anwar, Monday, advised Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) to submit budget proposals along with details of all issues in writing at the earliest.

The chairman NTC, while speaking at a meeting during his visit to KCCI, said that budget proposals submitted by the stakeholders were forwarded to NTC for review by the Commission's technical team which carefully analyzes, assesses repercussions and if found favorable

for the economy, forward the proposals to the government for inclusion in the budget, said a statement issued here. President KCCI Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh, Vice President Tanveer Barry, Chairman Special Committee for Budget Proposals Muhammad Ibrahim Kasumbi, Former Presidents Majid Aziz and Junaid Esmail Makda, KCCI Managing Committee Members and other representatives of various trade bodies also attended the meeting.

Naem Anwar listened to the grievances being faced by the business com-

munity and assured that issues highlighted by Karachi Chamber will be reviewed by the NTC team and recommendations will be given to the government for rectifying the same in the Federal Budget 2024-25.

He stated that NTC, which operates under NTC Act 2015, was duty-bound to get three of its laws effectively implemented which include anti-dumping law, subsidies countervailing law and safeguard measures to ensure growth for domestic industry, support manufacturing sector and obstruct unfair trade practices in imports.

NPO, APO collaborate to enhance Paki gemstone Industry through international standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Productivity Organization (NPO), Pakistan in collaboration with Asian Productivity Organization (APO), Japan is organizing an International Workshop on value addition of gemstone products for compliance with international standards from 22nd to 25th April 2024 here on

MoU inked to provide skill based training to BISP beneficiaries' family members

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) here on Monday to provide high quality technical and vocational education to the BISP beneficiaries' families members.

The primary objective of the MoU was to establish a robust framework for cooperation between NAVTTC and

Monday. The said workshop is attended by 18 overseas participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam from APO member countries, 11 local participants and sessions will be delivered by the international resource speakers from Thailand.

BISP in executing the Skills Training Vouchers Programme. This initiative was specifically designed to extend access to high-quality technical and vocational education to members of BISP beneficiary families.

The signing ceremony was graced by the presence of distinguished personalities, including Chairperson BISP, Dr Muhammad Amjad Saqib, who witnessed the historic moment.

IFL scheme continues to serve underprivileged class

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Interest-Free Loan (IFL) scheme being executed by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is contributing immensely to financially empowering impoverished families across the country by providing loans for small businesses, making them self-reliant.

The Interest Free Loan Programme is a flagship initiative of the government designed and implemented by the PPAF

and is strategically aimed at promoting financial inclusion as a means of reducing poverty by providing interest-free loans to impoverished households in more than 100 districts across Pakistan. These loans serve to empower poor households to initiate income-generating enterprises, thereby fostering economic self-sufficiency and improving their overall quality of life. IFL beneficiary,

Ameeran Bibi who lives in Gharibabad, Piplan, Mianwali said, "My grandfather used to make pottery so my father and now I make pottery at my home however we didn't have enough finances to sustain this business". "My husband is suffering from serious health issues and my son helps his father arrange pottery in the shop before going to school and take care of the business after school, allowing his father to rest", she said.

OEC to export medical experts to Qatar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) an attached department of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development would send its well-trained workforce of Pediatric and Geriatric nurses to a Qatari medical firm during the current fiscal year. According to the advertisement of OEC, Tabeeb Care Medical Services required nursing staff in the field of Pediatric and Geriatric from Pakistan.

PSX collaborates with London Stock Exchange Group on ESG

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark development, Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has signed a collaborative understanding with LSEG (London Stock Exchange Group) on Environment, Social and Governance (ESG).

Under this mutual understanding, both companies will work to develop a suite of standardized ESG data tools that can be used by PSX listed companies for

their ESG data reporting, according to PSX press statement received here.

This understanding benefits PSX and listed companies in that the platform would not only provide ESG scoring but also enhance the visibility of Pakistani companies on the international ESG radars, it said adding the arrangement would also help lay down the groundwork for an ESG Index planned by the PSX in the future.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health and Emergency Services Punjab Khawaja Salman Rafique addressing the participants of 6th VCs, Principals and MSs conference.

CM emphasizes completion of tourism-related projects, activities on emergency basis

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism Culture, and Archeology, Zahid Chanzeb has stressed on the urgent completion of tourism activities and projects to achieve 100 percent set goals for the development of tourism.

He indicated that the government would evaluate the performance of the departments based on the achievement of the targets and would release funds as per the performance,

adding that the institutions with perform would be strongly encouraged and funded. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting of Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) at Pakhtunkhwa, said a press release issued here Monday. The Tourism Adviser issued clear instructions to the KDA to take concrete steps to develop tourism in the area and provide more facilities to tourists. He said that the development strategy should include provision of quality services in hotels

and restaurants, washrooms and drinking water to tourists at the spots as well as on the sides of the highways at a suitable distance.

He said that the owners of the local hotels and restaurants should be asked to manage the facilities on road side.

He said the provincial government and the Department of Tourism and Culture were committed to promoting tourism on a solid basis throughout the province and working on a five-year

Punjab govt working to improve people's quality of life: Minister

SIALKOT (APP): Provincial Minister for Local Government Zeeshan Rafique has said that the provincial cabinet under the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is working day and night to improve the quality of life of the people of the province and fruitful results have started appearing in the form of reduction in the prices of flour and bread (roti) and the provision of best municipal services in urban and rural areas.

Punjab Governor says: PAS has important role in running the country's admin affairs, development

Independent Report
LAHORE: A delegation comprising participants of 47th Specialized Training Program and the first Specialized Training Course called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman. The delegation was led by Director Civil Services Academy Dr. Sajid Mahmood Chauhan. Governor Punjab welcomed the delegation to Governor House. Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab

Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that Pakistan Administrative Service has an important role in running the country's administrative affairs and development. He said that while performing their professional responsibilities, they should strive for the welfare and betterment of general public. He said that success depends not only on individual abilities and resources, but also on how effectively these resources are used.

Minister reviews projects of Food Safety and Halal Food Authority

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru on Monday presided over a comprehensive review meeting regarding the performance and ongoing projects of Food Safety and Halal Food Authority.

The minister emphasized ensuring the supply of quality and adulteration-free food products to citizens in the markets and directed the relevant officials to take necessary steps in this regard. Zahir Shah highlighted that the provincial government was taking priority actions to enhance the capacity of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority.

The minister extended that seven mobile food testing laboratories were working in the fields and soon five more mobile food labs along with a state-of-the-art lab soon would be inaugurated.

Chaos party coming to an end: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said on Monday that yesterday in by-polls the people of Punjab had once again rejected the agenda of unrest.

Talking to media here, she said, "It is a wrong impression that governments win by-elections and the fact is that people only vote to those parties which deliver."

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was habitual of making hue and cry whether they win or not, she said and added that chaos party was coming to an end.

She said that soon Punjab CM would give a comprehensive plan for farmers.

Azma said how unfortunate it was that Moonis Elahi could see rigging while sitting in Spain but could not see misery of his father.

Glimpses of Iranian President H.E. Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Pakistan



International News

Greek and Turkish delegations meet in Athens as part of efforts to improve often strained ties

Monitoring Desk
ATHENS: Delegations from Greece and Turkey were meeting in Athens on Monday as part of long-standing efforts to improve often tense relations between the two neighbors, days after Turkey voiced objections over Greece's plans to create marine nature reserves in the Ionian and Aegean seas.

The two regional rivals are NATO allies but have been at odds for decades over a series of issues, including territorial claims in the Aegean and drilling rights in the Mediterranean, and have come to the brink of war three times in the last 50 years. A dispute over energy exploration rights in 2020 led to the two countries' warships facing off in the Mediterranean.

Monday's meeting in the Defense Ministry in Athens was to discuss confidence-building measures, following a similar meeting in Ankara last November. The two countries have engaged in the confidence-building process on and off for years, trying to seek common ground on a series of lower-key issues as a means of improving ties. The meeting comes ahead of planned talks in Ankara on May 13 between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Tense ties have improved significantly over the past year, with Erdogan visiting Athens in December and signing a raft of trade, energy and education deals. But Mitsotakis' announcement last week that

Greece will create two marine parks for the protection of sea mammals and birds — one in the Ionian Sea in western Greece and one in the central Aegean — has angered Turkey.

Omer Celik, spokesman for Erdogan's ruling party, said last week that Ankara considers the creation of the marine parks "a step that sabotages the normalization process" in relations, and said Turkey would "in no way allow actions toward the declaration of marine parks in the Aegean Sea."

Mitsotakis, speaking last week after a meeting of European leaders in Brussels, expressed surprise at what he described as "Turkey's totally unjustified reaction to an initiative which at the end of the day is of an environmental nature."



Officials count votes during the parliamentary elections, at a polling station in Maldives's capital Male.

Landslide win for pro-China leader's party in Maldives vote

Monitoring Desk
MALE: The party of Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu won control of parliament in a Sunday election landslide, results showed, with voters backing his tilt towards China and away from regional powerhouse and traditional benefactor India.

Muizzu's People's National Congress (PNC) won 66 of the first 86 seats declared, according to the Elections Commission of Maldives results, already more than enough for a super-majority in the 93-

member majlis, or parliament. The vote was seen as a crucial test for Muizzu's plan to press ahead with closer economic cooperation with China.

The PNC and its allies had only eight seats in the outgoing parliament, with the lack of a majority stymieing Muizzu after his presidential election victory in September.

The main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) — which had previously had a super-majority of its own.

First Iran group in nine years heads to Saudi Arabia for Umrah pilgrimage

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: The first group of Iranian pilgrims in nine years made its way to Saudi Arabia on Monday for the Umrah, or minor pilgrimage, Iran's official news agency reported, as a result of improving ties between the two Middle Eastern powers.

Iranian media had said in December that Saudi Arabia had lifted restrictions on Iranians wanting to perform Umrah but flights were delayed until now due to what Tehran called "technical problems".

In March 2023, China mediated an agreement under which Iran and Saudi Arabia restored full diplomatic relations that were cut since 2016 over Riyadh's execution of a Shi'ite Muslim cleric and the subsequent storming of the Saudi embassy in Tehran.



A grieving woman is consoled by a man after the body of her relative was discovered, buried by Israeli forces in a mass grave in the Nasser hospital compound in Khan Younis.

Iran says nuclear weapons have no place in its nuclear doctrine

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's nuclear doctrine, the country's foreign ministry said on Monday, days after a Revolutionary Guards commander warned that Tehran might change its nuclear policy if pressured by Israeli threats.

"Iran has repeatedly said its nuclear programme only serves peaceful purposes. Nuclear weapons have no place in our nuclear doctrine," ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said during a press conference in Tehran.

Following a spike in tensions with Israel, the Guards commander in charge of nuclear security Ahmad Haghtalab said last week that Israeli threats could push Tehran to "review its nuclear doctrine and deviate from its previous considerations."

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the last say on Tehran's nuclear programme.

West Bank camp mourns Palestinians killed in Israeli raid

Monitoring Desk
TULKAREM: Families kissed the faces of the dead and neighbours cried in the streets after one of the worst Israeli raids anyone in the Nur Shams refugee camp can remember. On Sunday a funeral procession for 13 Palestinians killed in the army's West Bank operation passed through roads piled with rubble from Israeli bulldozers and rocket fire. Israeli forces carry out regular raids on towns and cities in the occupied West Bank.

Separately, the Palestinian Red Crescent said on Saturday that at least 14 people were killed during an Israeli raid on a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank.

Poland's prime minister celebrates after his party wins a string of cities in mayoral votes

Monitoring Desk
WARSAW: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk expressed satisfaction on Monday after a series of candidates supported by his party won weekend races for mayor. Candidates from his pro-European Union centrist Civic Coalition, or running with the party's backing, won in a series of cities in the second round of local elections held on Sunday, among them Krakow, Poznan, Wroclaw and Kzeszow.

"It is very difficult to clearly say who won and who lost," Tusk said Monday. "But if we compare these results, especially in the most attractive places, on these attractive battlefields... then I actually have reasons for satisfaction."

"Law and Justice has simply disappeared in many places," Tusk added at a news conference, referring to the main opposition party. The results put Civic Coalition in a favorable position as the country looks next to elections to the European Parliament on June 9.

Ukraine says it damaged Russian rescue ship in Crimea

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukraine's military said on Sunday it had struck and damaged a long-serving Russian rescue vessel in Sevastopol, the headquarters in occupied Crimea of Moscow's Black Sea Fleet. Navy spokesperson Dmytro Pletenchuk said the vessel, the Komuna, had been hit in Sevastopol Bay on Sunday morning and it was "clear that the ship is no longer in a state to carry out assignments."

A post on the Ukrainian Armed Forces Telegram channel said the ship was one of the oldest operated by the Russian navy.

50 more bodies found at hospital in Gaza's Khan Younis

Monitoring Desk
GAZA: Health workers have uncovered at least 50 bodies of people killed and buried by Israeli forces at a hospital, in the southern city of Khan Younis.

But while Israeli military said it was checking reports about the recovery of 50 bodies, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared far from being willing to respect the United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire, saying he would fight against sanctions being imposed on any Israeli army units.

Israel's invasion has so far killed 34,097 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry.

Separately, the Palestinian Red Crescent said on Saturday that at least 14 people were killed during an Israeli raid on a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli army said it killed 10 people during the operation at Nur Shams camp. "Inside the Nasser Medical Complex there are mass graves dug by the Israeli occupation... we were shocked by the presence of bodies of 50 martyrs in one of the pits yesterday," said Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the Gaza civil defence agency.

"We are continuing the search operation today and are waiting for all graves to be exhumed in order to give a final number of martyrs." He said some of those killed had been tortured. "There were no clothes on some bodies, which certainly indicates (the victims) faced torture and abuse," Mr Bassal said.

Philippines, US troops begin annual combat drills

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: Nearly 17,000 Filipino and American troops will begin a three-week joint combat training exercise in the Philippines on Monday involving maritime drills in the South China Sea where Manila and Beijing have sparred over maritime borders. France and Australia, which have ramped up defence ties with Manila in the face of China's aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea, will join the maritime exercises to be conducted for the first time outside Philippine territorial waters.

The annual Balikatan or "shoulder-to-shoulder" drills, which will run from April 22 to May 10, come amid an escalating diplomatic row and maritime encounters between the Philippines and China including the use of water cannon and heated verbal exchanges.

Beijing's increasing pressure in the South China Sea has alarmed Manila, rival claimants to disputed maritime territory, and other states operating there, including the United States which has reaffirmed its commitment to defend the Philippines against armed aggression in the South China Sea.

China claims most of the South China Sea, which is a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce. Beijing has criticised the joint drills, saying they aggravate tensions and undermine regional stability.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague ruled in 2016 that Beijing's expansive claims to the sea had no basis under international law. China rejects the ruling and has built military facilities on disputed atolls to back up its claims.

Pakistan, Iran sign eight accords to strengthen bilateral cooperation in multiple sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday signed a total of eight accords on varying subjects to enhance cooperation in the different fields including trade, science technology, agriculture, health, culture, and judicial matters.

The documents were signed between the two countries on the occasion of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's three-day official visit to Pakistan.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President Raisi witnessed the ceremony as the representatives from both sides, signed the documents. The two countries signed an MoU on the Establishment of the Rimdan

Gabd Joint Free/Special Zone. The memorandum was inked by Secretary Board of Investment Amreen Ifikhar and Iranian Advisor to President and Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade Industrial and Special Economic Zones Hojjatollah Abdolmaleki.

The MoU on Mutual Recognition of the Standard of Iran and Pakistan, was signed by Minister of Science and Technology Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash.

An MoU on Cooperation between the Ministry of Cooperative Labour and Social Welfare of Iran and

the Ministry of Overseas Pakistani and Human Resources Development of Pakistan was also signed by Minister of Overseas Pakistani Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash.

Minister of Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar and Iranian Minister of Justice Amin Hossein Rahimi inked an agreement on Judicial Assistance in Civil Matters between Iran and Pakistan.

Pakistan and Iran also signed an Agreement of Cooperation on Animal Hygiene and Health. The document was signed by Minister of National Food

Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and Iranian Minister of Agriculture Jihad Mohammad Ali Nikhahkt.

Similarly, the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) in the Field of Quarantine and Phytosanitary was also inked by Minister of National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and Iran's Minister of Agriculture Jihad Mohammad Ali Nikhahkt.

The two sides also signed an MoU for Legal Cooperation between the Ministry of Justice of Iran and the Ministry of Law and Justice of Pakistan. Minister of Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar and



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Iran H.E. Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi witness signing of MoUs of cooperation in different fields between Iran and Pakistan.

Gillani calls for enhancing parliamentary engagements between Pakistan and Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gillani on Monday extended a warm welcome to the Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and his delegation, and called for enhancing parliamentary engagements, fostering regional cooperation, and further improving bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran.

During the meeting, the chairman emphasized the deep historical ties between his family and Iran, tracing back to his ancestor, Hazrat Ghaus-ul-Azam, said a news release issued by the Senate Secretariat.

He reiterated the personal significance of his past visits to Iran, where he emphasized the importance of bilateral dialogue in strengthening relations between the two nations.

He recalled that Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan in 1947, further solidifying the strong ties between the two nations.

Reaffirming the enduring cordial relations between Pakistan and Iran, the chairman celebrated the strong bilateral ties grounded in shared values and cultural heritage. He emphasized that these ties serve as the bedrock of foreign policy, contributing to

regional stability and prosperity.

Expressing commitment to enhancing parliamentary cooperation, the chairman underscored the need for greater inter-parliamentary engagements and exchange programs aimed at bolstering the capacity and expertise of parliamentary staff.

He also shared concerns over recent developments in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting the volatile situation and expressed gratitude for Iran's continued support towards the just cause of the Kashmiri people.

He also shared concerns over recent developments in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting the volatile situation and expressed gratitude for Iran's continued support towards the just cause of the Kashmiri people.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

Pakistan on track to secure new loan from IMF: FM

ISLAMABAD (INP): With macroeconomic factors shifting in Pakistan's favour, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Islamabad is on track to secure a new loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) — the Washington-based lender. In an interview with The National, the finance czar said: "The fund has been very receptive in terms of agreeing to consider a larger, longer programme."

Pakistan has made a formal request to the IMF for another bailout package in the range of \$6 to \$8 billion under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing. However, the exact size and time-frame will only be determined after evolving consensus on the

major contours of the next programme in May 2024.

Aurangzeb told the Abu Dhabi-based publication that the macroeconomic factors are shifting in its favour as it works to boost its lagging economy.

The rupee has finally stabilised, he said, adding that the inflation is on track to drop to single-digit levels by the end of next year.

He further said that the cash-strapped nation would need at least three years of support to carry out a reform agenda across several sectors including taxation and energy.

Last week, the global lender's Middle East and Central Asia director said the IMF was ready to support Pakistan and the package of reforms is now more important than the size of the new programme.

NA reaffirms Pakistan's relationship with Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Monday emphasized the importance of Pakistan's relationship with its brotherly Islamic country Iran, highlighting the unity of the entire parliament and its members in nurturing these ties.

While presiding over the sitting, the Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq stated, "We consider Iran as our brother."

He highlighted his meeting with President of Iran, Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, where he was accompanied by a delegation comprising representatives from each political party from the lower house.

This gesture aimed to convey the message of the parliament's unity in strengthening relations with Iran, he added.

The Speaker emphasized that representation of each party in the House during his meeting with the Iranian President symbolized the parliament's deep respect for its guests and collective commitment to fostering friendly ties with Iran. MNA Aamir Dogar condemned the ongoing genocide of Palestinians and emphasized the condemnation of Israel's atrocities against the innocent people of Gaza.

Pakistan says it backs UN agency in ensuring food security

UNITED NATIONS (INP): Pakistan has told the just-concluded UN Economic and Social (ECOSOC) Youth Forum that it supports the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in creating a facility with broader and people-centric criteria to further strengthen its efforts to defeat hunger, improve nutrition and food security in the developing countries.

"We have considerable potential in the agriculture sector and could play an important role in building the global food supply chains," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan, said at the forum attended by over 1,000 youth leaders and activists from around the world.

At the same time, he extended Pakistan's support to the UN Secretary-General's call for urgent reform of the global financial system, notably how to approach debt relief on behalf of the billions of distressed citizens living in the developing world, saying it was critical for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2) to end world hunger. Ambassador Jadoon also underscored the need for concerted international efforts to establish resilient and sustainable food systems that can withstand shocks and disruptions in light of the increasing vulnerability of global food systems to a multitude of challenges. He warned that the world was facing a convergence of crises, from conflicts to climate change, and from supply chain disruptions to economic contractions, which posed significant threats to the ability of existing food systems to provide nutritious, safe, and affordable diets for all.

Asif Zardari seeks presidential immunity from court in NAB case

ISLAMABAD (Online): The court has given indication to issue arrest warrants of president Asif Ali Zardari in NAB case while counsel for Asif Ali Zardari has sought presidential immunity from court.

According to media reports, Thatta water supply reference against Asif Ali Zardari and others came up for hearing in Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad Monday.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana of AC heard the case. Judge remarked during hearing of the case one accused has not signed roll. If he does not appear then his arrest warrants will be issued.

The counsel for president Asif Ali Zardari sought presidential immunity saying petition has been filed on behalf of Asif Ali Zardari for presidential immunity.

The report regarding NAB presidential immunity was presented in the court.

According to NAB report under article 248 of the constitution president enjoys presidential immunity.

The court adjourned the hearing of the case till May 21.



QUETTA: Secretary Finance Babar Khan presenting a shield to newly appointed Provincial Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Nausherwani.

Bushra Bibi shifting to Adiala jail case: We don't want more delay: IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) while seeking written arguments from the lawyers of Bushra Bibi wife of PTI founder on her petition in connection with her shifting from Bani Gala to Adiala jail has remarked we don't want more delay in this case.

The hearing of the case was adjourned till next week. Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb remarked how chief commissioner can declare him provincial government. You have kept him in solitary confinement. This is in a way a torture.

The court remarked one writ and 6 miscellaneous petitions have come in this case.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb while moving to state counsel said you have no grounds.

The court inquired from the counsel do you want to get shift Bushra Bibi from Bani Gala to Adiala jail.

Usman Riaz Gul and Khalid Yousuf Chaudhry appeared as counsels for Bushra Bibi.

State counsel said we on our own are seeing about establishment of sub jail. We are seeing if any thing is not illegal.

Justice Miangul Hassan remarked how can chief commissioner declare himself provincial government. You have kept him in solitary confinement. This is in a way a torture.

The court remarked one writ and 6 miscellaneous petitions have come in this case.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb while moving to state counsel said you have no grounds.

The court inquired from the counsel do you want to get shift Bushra Bibi from Bani Gala to Adiala jail.

Govt renames Islamabad's new highway as Iran Avenue

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to name a new highway in Islamabad after the brotherly neighbouring country, Iran.

Islamabad's Eleventh Avenue has been named Iran Avenue as per the federal government's decision. The decision has been accorded by the federal cabinet on the CDA summary through circulation. It may be noted that the CDA has started the construction of Eleventh Avenue. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi today arrived in Pakistan for a three-day official visit.

The Iranian president reached the federal capital with his spouse, a high-level delegation of cabinet members and senior officials.

The Foreign Office (FO) said Raisi arrived at the Islamabad airport and was received by Housing Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada and Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran Mudassar Tipu.

WB initiates Integrated Flood Resilience & Adaptation Project costing Rs. 8.8 bn in Balochistan

Independent Report QUETTA: The World Bank has started the Integrated Flood Resilience and Adaptation Project costing Rs. 8.8 billion for construction and repair of different infrastructure affected during floods in the Balochistan province.

In addition to this, the World Bank is also going to start another project of 100 million US dollars namely Balochistan Water Security Productivity Improvement Project. This project would help meet the water shortage in Quetta city besides improving the Kachhi plane flood management.

This was informed by the delegation of World Bank who called on the Provincial Minister for Irrigation, Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani here on Monday.

The team leader of World Bank, Yoro Sidibe led the delegation.

Acting Speaker visits different sections of BA Secretariat

Independent Report QUETTA: The acting Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Ms. Farah Azeem Shah has stated that it is vision of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti to provide healthy activities to the women and youth which increase their capabilities.

She was briefed about the Secretary Provincial Assembly and other senior officials about the overall functions and operations of the assembly.

The acting Speaker went round of different sections of assembly and oversaw their functions.

It may be mentioned here that Deputy Speaker Ms Ghazala Gola has been serving as acting Speaker of the provincial assembly these days.

Closing ceremony of Eiman Mela held: CM's vision is to provide healthy activities to women & youth: Farah

Independent Report QUETTA: The Member Provincial Assembly, Ms. Farah Azeem Shah has stated that it is vision of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti to provide healthy activities to the women and youth which increase their capabilities.

She was addressing the closing ceremony of Eiman Pakistan Mela arranged at the Liaquat Park on Sunday night.

Ms. Fatah Azeem Shah said that the objective behind holding the Eiman Pakistan Mela is to portray the positive image of Balochistan on one hand and provide opportunities to women to introduce their skills on the other hand, she added.

The lady MPA from Balochistan Awami Parry said that such melas also provide opportunity to the participating women and children to witness the dresses and other traditional items at the stalls set up in such festivals but they also benefit from their experiences and skills.

The members of provincial assembly, political personalities and other high ups participated in the ceremony. The women and children coming from different areas expressed their deep interest in the stalls of cultural dresses, handicrafts and different food items.

The singers presented national and traditional songs in the closing ceremony of Eiman Pakistan mela.

Most of the men and women participated in the ceremony wearing traditional cultural dresses and shoes.

It may be mentioned here that Ms Farah Azeem Shah was the main organizer and host of the festival.

CDC of RMC calls emergency meeting on 25th April

Independent Report NOKUNDI: The Community Development Committee (CDC) of the Rekodiq Mining Company has called an emergency meeting on April 25 at the residence of its General Secretary, Haji Arz Mohammad Barech, to address the concerns and anxieties of the youth and the public regarding the irregularities in the employment process of the Rekodiq Project, the company's policies, and other issues.

The CDC members have stated that they will take a strong stance on prioritizing the social interests of the area and giving preference to local youth in the project.

They said that if they cannot serve the public through the CDC, they will consider dissolving the committee.

They also stated that this time, there will be a straightforward conversation with the responsible persons of Rekodiq.

Harnai-Sibi railway section restored for traffic after nine days

HARNAI (INP): Pakistan Railways has restored the Harnai-Sibi railway section for train service after nine days on Monday.

The railway track was damaged during recent flash floods generated by unprecedented rainfall in Balochistan.

The railways restored the track with repair after the train service suspended for nine days.

It is to be mentioned here that the Harnai-Sibi section of Pakistan Railways was restored last year in October for train service after closure of railway traffic for 18 years. The railway track was closed in February 2006.

The railway's track was made dysfunctional after a series of bomb blasts, which damaged 22 steel bridges in the highly rugged and inaccessible area.

In March 2016, a contract for rehabilitation and restoration of the Sibi-Harnai railway track along with the upgradation of railway stations was awarded to the NLC.

During the initial survey of the track, it was found that 22 steel bridges were destroyed and required replacement for the restoration of the train operation.

Railway official said a total of nine railway stations along with tracks had been upgraded by NLC engineers including the reconstruction of Harnai Railway Station and a complete renovation of Sibi Railway Station.

NA unanimously passes resolution to address plastic pollution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a resolution, calling for coordinated efforts among citizens, organizations, and government entities to tackle the global challenge of plastic pollution.

The resolution, presented by Federal Minister Azam Nazir Tarar on World Earth Day, said that the Government of Pakistan acknowledged the critical importance of safeguarding the planet, its environment, and ecosystems. It highlights the detrimental impact of plastic pollution on Pakistan's environment.

The resolution said the Ministry of Climate Change recognised the paramount importance of preserving the environment and ecosystems.

It emphasized the urgent need to combat plastic pollution, as highlighted by the theme "Planet versus Plastic," and safeguard the

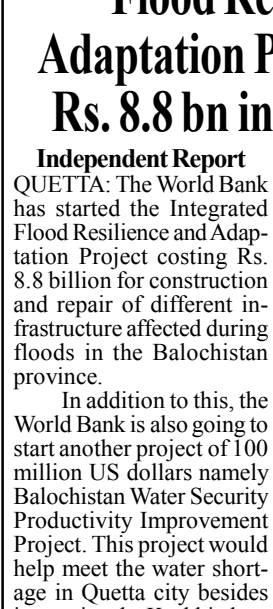
planet's health.

Plastic pollution is identified as a significant threat to Pakistan's environment, wildlife, and public health in the resolution.

planet's health.

Plastic pollution is identified as a significant threat to Pakistan's environment, wildlife, and public health in the resolution.

Govt renames Islamabad's new highway as Iran Avenue



QUETTA: A delegation led by team lead of World Bank Yoro Sidibe meeting with Provincial Minister for Irrigation Mir Sadiq Umrani.