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

Pakistan would not hold talks with TTP: Foreign Office

Israel's adventurism in region unacceptable; must be held accountable

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan has ruled out talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Responding to the queries of media persons at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad Thursday regarding the suggestion made by an Afghan Minister for talks between Pakistan and TTP, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan expects the Afghan authorities to take urgent action against the terrorist outfits and their leadership for the crimes they are committing and terrorist incidents they are responsible for in Pakistan. She said Pakistan remains committed to fighting against all the terrorist outfits which have targeted Pakistan and the symbols of Pakistan-China friendship. She said that following the security audit and enhancement of security measures, the Chinese projects in Pakistan are functional. The spokesperson vehemently condemned the terrorist attack in Iran. Expressing solidarity with the Iranian people, she said Pakistan would like to work with Iran to find joint solutions to terrorism. When asked about the Palestinians' fresh bid for the UN membership, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan recognizes the state of Palestine and will support any such move at the UN. Condemning the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza, she called for international accountability of Israel for its crimes against humanity. Expressing concerns over the Indian occupation authorities' decision to deny permission to hold Eid ul Fitr prayers at Eidgah in Srinagar, she urged the Indian authorities to respect the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to peacefully practice their religion. She said Pakistan will continue to extend moral, political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people for the just and peaceful settlement of Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions.

New IMF programme crucial for economic stability: PM

Steps afoot to reduce inflation, alleviate unemployment & poverty; Reassures probe over threat letters to judges, rules out politics

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the government was planning to enter a new programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which he said, was very important to consolidate the country's economy. "With the new IMF programme, the international institutions will have more trust on us and we will be able to move forward on the agenda of development and prosperity with more confidence," he said while speaking with the participants of the cabinet meeting held here under his chairmanship. He said the finance minister was going to Washington this month with a delegation to participate in the IMF

spring meetings where he will also discuss details of the new programme with the IMF. He said although the terms of the new deal would not be so easy, but the government will shift the burden of the tough conditions from the less privileged to the wealthy. The prime minister hoped that after the IMF board meeting, the last tranche of existing standby agreement worth \$1.1 billion will be disbursed to Pakistan this month. With regard to PIA's divestment, he said the privatization process of Pakistan Airlines was on track and the schedule set for the process would be fully implemented. He said that for the outsourcing of the airports, a Turkish company was

arriving Islamabad on April 6 which would negotiate the outsourcing process with the Pakistani authorities. About digitization of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister informed that the consultants for the digitization process would be appointed by end of the current month. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said, he recently chaired a meeting of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in which details of various sectors including finance, investment, exports, Information Technology, agriculture, power and petroleum were discussed. "After a detailed meeting, it was decided that I will personally review the sector wise performance to solve out the problems

faced by the sectors and to streamline the country's economy," he added. The prime minister pointed out that the government had fulfilled its due responsibility with respect to the inquiry of the matter of letter by the Islamabad High Court judges by forming an inquiry commission led by former Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani. Afterward, he said Tassaduq Hussain Jilani refused from the commission, subsequently the Supreme Court took a suo motu notice of the letter. As regards of receiving letters by the judges with suspicious powder, the prime minister said the government was investigating the matter. "The government, with the sense of responsibility will also probe this matter to uncover the reality." With respect to the security of the Chinese workers and engineers, the prime minister said the government was evolving a fool proof system for the security of the Chinese workers. The prime minister said the cabinet presented the finance division's Fiscal Policy Statement for the financial year 2022-23, the Debt Policy Statement for the financial year 2022-23 and the Year End Government Performance Monitoring Report in the meeting. The federal cabinet approved the submission of the above statements/report to the National Assembly under prevailing laws, he said.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, calls on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President assures envoy Pakistan will take steps to ensure security of Chinese nationals

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari assured Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong on Thursday that Pakistan would take necessary measures to ensure the security of Chinese nationals working on projects in the country. The meeting between the two comes a week after five Chinese engineers — and their Pakistani driver — were killed in a suicide bombing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bisham while travelling between Islamabad and a hydroelectric dam construction site in Dasu. The bus was attacked in the Bisham city of KP's Shangla district. The attack prompted China to demand a thorough probe into the deadly blast and security for its citizens. In response, Islamabad had announced a swift probe to hold the "perpetrators and accomplices" accountable. Chinese investigators had also arrived to join the probe. In response to the Chinese government's demand to promptly investigate the incident and act against those involved, the government had also decided to form a joint investigation team to probe the attack. A statement issued by the presidency today said Ambassador Zaidong called on President Zardari at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. "The meeting discussed matters of mutual interest, besides underscoring the need to increase counter-terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing to overcome the menace of terrorism." "The president assured the ambassador that Pakistan would take all necessary measures to ensure the security of our Chinese brothers, who are working on different projects in Pakistan," it added.



LARKANA: Chairman PPP, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari along with Central President PPP Women Wing MPA Ms. Faryal Talpur and other offering Fatcha at the grave of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.

Bilawal visits mausoleum of martyrs at Garhi Khuda Bux

LARKANA (APP): Chairman, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday visited the Mausoleum of the martyrs of Bhutto's family in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh in connection with the 45th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was accompanied by the central president of PPP (Women Wing) Ms. Faryal Talpur and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. They visited the grave of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, laid a floral wreath at the grave, and offered Fatcha. They also visited the graves of late Begum Nusrat Bhutto, late Shireen Amir Begum, Shaheed Mir Murtaza Bhutto, and Shaheed Mir Shah Nawaz Bhutto.

Pakistan, UK agree to expand defence ties

ISLAMABAD (APP) - British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott called on Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif here on Thursday. The defence minister expressed satisfaction over ongoing collaboration between the two countries for regional stability. Both sides stressed the need for expansion of defence and security ties between two countries. The minister and the high commissioner expressed satisfaction over ongoing collaboration between the two countries for regional stability. Both sides stressed the need for expansion of defence and security ties between two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to British High Commissioner, Ms. Jane Marriott.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan vow to deepen cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Azerbaijan here on Thursday vowed to strengthen cooperation between the two brotherly countries in diverse fields for mutual benefit. The commitment was made during the meeting of Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov with Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Khan Cheema, said a press statement issued by Economic Affairs Division (EAD). They engaged in discussions regarding matters of mutual interest. Minister Ahad Cheema acknowledged the longstanding fraternal relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, which have flourished since the independence of Azerbaijan. He emphasized that

Saudi Arabia invites PM for Umrah

RIYADH (INP): Saudi Arabia has extended an invitation to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for Umrah, following a decision on a scheduled meeting with the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. According to sources, Prime Minister Sharif is expected to depart for Umrah after a meeting with Prince Mohammed bin Salman is scheduled.

Tarar urges political parties not to politicize national economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday urged opposition and other political parties not to politicize national economy stabilized due to consistent efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He said the minister recalled the hardships faced by the exporters in the recent past due to the fast fluctuation in the exchange rate especially stemmed from the wrong economic policies of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar along with Prime Minister's Coordinator Romina Khurshid talking to media.

US vows to expand security partnership with Pakistan

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States has vowed to expand the security partnership between Washington and Pakistan. Addressing the press briefing, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that security partnership with Pakistan has been their top priority and will continue to do so. Miller stated that the US wants to see everyone in Pakistan treated according to the law, we support the rule of the constitution everywhere in the world, and we will continue to monitor all aid programs".

Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Addressing a news conference, the minister recalled the initiatives taken by PM Shehbaz Sharif led government during its previous tenure of 16 months. He was flanked by Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam. The minister gave credit to PM Shehbaz Sharif for successful negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that resulted into a standby agreement with the fund in the recent past. He said such initiatives had ultimately stabilized rupee against dollar and brought an improvement in the exchange rate subsequent government. "There should be no politics on the economy and everyone should play their due role for economic stability," Tarar said while highlighting the positive indicators recorded with the arrival of PM Shehbaz Sharif's government in the country. He said Bloomberg had forecast a significant reduction in inflation in the country next year and simultaneously predicted an economic growth for Pakistan in the coming days. The country moving in right direction as the economy had started to boom which was reflected from the positive economic indicators, the minister noted.

CM Maryam Nawaz meets World Bank country director

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had a meeting with World Bank Country Director Najy Benhassine to discuss World Bank-funded development projects in Punjab. Emphasising the need for early completion of the ongoing public welfare projects in the province, the Chief Minister said, "I will personally monitor the ongoing World Bank-funded projects." Mr Najy Benhassine congratulated Maryam Nawaz on being elected first female Chief Minister of Punjab. CM Maryam thanked him for the good words, and agreed to continue cooperation with the World Bank to achieve sustainable development in Punjab. The Chief Minister briefed the WB Country Director about the projects like province-wide solid waste management, Knowledge Park, and nutrition for the malnourished children in Punjab. She added, "The project of providing packaged milk to students in government primary schools is being started soon." She said, "The World Bank and other institutions will be welcomed to join this project." The CM highlighted the need for mutual cooperation for smog elimination and air quality improvement. The progress of WB-funded Punjab Green Development Program, and Punjab Cities Program was also reviewed in the meeting.



LAHORE: World Bank Country Director Najy Benhassine meeting with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to discuss World Bank-funded development projects in Punjab.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Pessimistic view

Unsurprisingly, the World Bank has given a pessimistic prognosis of Pakistan's moribund economy. On Tuesday, it said the country's economic growth is expected to pick up — slightly — from the current fiscal year (after contracting 0.2pc last year) but would remain below 3pc for the next two years as "policy constraints to sustainable economic growth remain unaddressed". Unless a major structural reform programme is durably implemented, growth will remain muted amid continued low investment, persistent external imbalances, distortionary fiscal policies, and a large state presence in the economy, the bank warned in the biannual Pakistan Development Update.

Even the latest growth estimates for Pakistan hinge on "continuous fiscal consolidation and a new bailout programme from the IMF". Neither the prognosis nor the warning is new. The lender had explicitly stated a few months back that debt-ridden Pakistan's current economic model was not working since it had fallen behind its peers, with progress in poverty reduction now starting to reverse, and the benefits of growth being accrued to a narrow elite.

Pakistan's options are few at this point: it can either head towards the abyss or get its act together to dodge economic devastation. Najy Benhassine, World Bank country director for Pakistan, is hopeful that the nation's ongoing macroeconomic crisis could be the "Pakistan moment", provided the authorities undertake bold structural reforms to put the faltering economy on the correct track like so many other countries have done on finding themselves on the brink of an economic disaster. Nonetheless, his message is clear: the only way forward for Pakistan is to implement broad-based reforms on a sustainable basis. "The structural reforms needed to durably improve the economic outlook are known," he said. Will policymakers heed the advice? Over the last several months, global lenders, IFIs and credit rating agencies have been forthcoming in their views on the existential threat facing Pakistan's economy as its external and fiscal imbalances continue to constrain its ability to import essential goods and make foreign debt payments. Their message of urgent reforms is often punctuated with their worry over the ruling and business elites' proclivity to digress from the path and return to their profligate policies as soon as international reserves improve and the external sector stabilises. Although the current government has repeatedly pledged to implement reforms for sustainable economic revival, a definitive policy direction is missing. Some progress has been made to privatise loss-making PIA, for instance, but the government is yet to spell out a holistic policy for scores of other SOEs.

Economic policy confusion is a major concern for creditors and investors. The prime minister must understand that his plans to boost productivity and exports will not work without the articulation of an unambiguous policy direction for the economy and deep structural reforms.

We were warned

F.S. Aijazuddin

Pakistan is a judicial jungle, thick with laws, and inhabited by lawyers and judges. Justice lies hidden somewhere in the undergrowth.

Even though all three leaders in the subcontinent — M.A. Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — studied law, the countries they sired are suffering from shared defects: legal inertia, judicial paralysis and civic frustration. Mercifully, they do not have to witness the unedifying sight of pending cases, piled like lost luggage at an inefficient airport.

The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan released statistics regarding all the cases pending before the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the Federal Shariat Court, all high courts and District Judiciary. They amount to "a staggering 2.26 million cases".

Over 1.86 million (82 per cent) are at the district level, with the remaining 18pc clogged at the upper tier. New cases filed exceed those resolved, adding every year to the backlog. It is a Sisyphean struggle, with the boulder increasing in size each year.

In India, the scale goes beyond the margins. It has the largest number of pending court cases in the world. In 2023, the total number of pending cases exceeded 50m. Over 169,000 court cases have been pending for more than 30 years in district and high courts. According to one Indian strategy paper, "it would take more than 324 years to clear the backlog". Almost as long as the number of years the Mughals ruled the subcontinent.

In Bangladesh, the backlog is 4.2m cases,

some pending with the district courts for more than five years.

When can Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi litigants expect justice? As one wit observed: "You get justice in the next world; in this world, you have the law."

In Pakistan, there are 160,000 or so registered lawyers whose duty it is to advise their clients. They show them both sides of the coin, and then pocket the coin. The savant Edmund Burke suggested a higher dimension: "It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do, but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do." That moral loquacity has since subsided into obscurity.

Over the years, the judiciary in Pakistan has undergone changes — some cosmetic, many overdue. Gone is the use of cumbersome wigs that were outdated and inappropriate for colonial climes. Statutes enforced in the name of an absentee sovereign have been replaced by onerous ordinances and leaking laws.

The judiciary has often been described as being the third pillar of the state. It is certainly the leanest. It has always been underfunded. In a textbook published by the Federal Judicial Academy, Islamabad (2005), its director griped that the judiciary was not getting even 1pc of the total budgetary allocation of the federal/provincial governments. This third pillar of state is tilting dangerously, its foundations eroded by the other two — the legislature and the executive.

The press — some regard it as a fourth pillar — in fact stands outside the constitutional tripod. Today, it is raucously independent. It no longer relies on government handouts. Its

solvency is underwritten by lucrative commercial advertising.

Of late, members of the judiciary have been diagnosed with a more dangerous malaise — a crisis of confidence in themselves, and in each other. Many (even judges) turn on one another in a feeding frenzy that in a less civilised society would be akin to cannibalism. They forget the words of the Argentinian novelist Augustina Bazterrica: "Today I'm the butcher; tomorrow I might be the cattle."

Many years ago, I was dropping my son off for his kindergarten class. From the car ahead of me, his schoolmate emerged, accompanied by a guard sporting a Kalashnikov rifle. He escorted him into their class of six-year-olds. I noticed that the car ahead bore the emblem of a judge of the Punjab High Court.

I tackled its occupant. I asked him whether he had gauged the impact his guard's Kalashnikov would have on the other young pupils in the classroom. Then I asked him that if the law could not safeguard him as a judge, then what protection could I, an unarmed member of the public, expect? He drove off quickly, hurling a less than judicious epithet.

It seems that nowadays an assassin's bullet is the least of a judge's worries. He needs to secure himself against microphones and inquisitive cameras installed in his home, some even in the privacy of his bedroom. The bottom has fallen out of our barrel of standards. In the 1990s, Singapore's leader Lee Kwan Yew visited Pakistan. On his way out, he was asked his opinion of us. He replied: "I have never seen a country so determined to commit suicide."

Prisoner welfare

Rida Tahir

The recent establishment of a committee by the Sindh government for the welfare of prisoners is a significant step towards prison reforms. Notified under Section 55 of the Sindh Prisons and Corrections Services Act, 2019, the committee is tasked with addressing the needs of prisoners and improving their conditions.

Sindh is the only province to have revised age-old colonial laws that govern Pakistan's prison system by enacting the aforementioned law. The Sindh Prisons and Corrections Services Rules framed under Section 80 of the Act span 162 pages. They are very comprehensive, indicating a detailed approach to reforming Sindh's prison system.

Conversely, the law for prisons in the other three provinces still reflect the influence of the Raj, with many laws and practices originating from that era. The Prisons Act, 1894, the Prisons Act, 1900, and the Prisons Rules, 1978, are the main laws currently in use in the country (except Sindh). These punitive laws contain the elements of colonial governance.

The law regarding prisons in Sindh is comparatively reformative; it aligns with the principles of dignity and advocates for transforming the prison system into a rehabilitative and educational service. The committee provides free legal aid to prisoners. Additionally, an early learning centre and children's playrooms have been established in women's prisons in Karachi and Hyderabad. The committee also provides football training camps to juveniles in Karachi and mental health services and sewing classes to women prisoners.

Although signifi-

cant improvements are needed, with particular reference to overcrowding and the need for expansion of recreational and rehabilitative facilities in all prisons in Sindh, the progress made so far is appreciable.

Sindh is also the only province to constitute a provincial human rights commission. The Sindh Human Rights Commission has been mandated by the Sindh Protection of Human Rights Act, 2011, to visit any jail or institution where persons are detained to make recommendations for improving their conditions. This works as a check-and-balance mechanism supplemented by laws at the federal level, such as the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022, which provides "protection to a person during custody from all acts of torture perpetrated by public officials".

Other federal laws, such as the Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018, protect juvenile offenders through the establishment of rehabilitation centres, focusing on the eventual reintegration of juveniles into society.

Unfortunately, there is a notable absence of empathy within the populace when it comes to addressing the human rights of prisoners. There is a common belief that prisoners are responsible for their own misfortune. This belief results in the lack of societal support for the well-being of prisoners. Consequently, the absence of public concern translates into a lack of government attention to the issue. If one is inclined to believe that prisoners deserve to live in poor conditions because of their own actions, the thought merits reconsideration.

Pakistan was ranked 130th out of 142

countries on the application of the rule of law and 99th on the effectiveness of its criminal justice system by the World Justice Project in 2023. These rankings underscore the significant prevalence of both wrongful convictions and wrongful prosecutions across the country.

According to a 2023 report released by Justice Project Pakistan, overcrowding in prisons is a widespread issue with some jails operating at over 200 per cent of their mandated capacity. This underscores the bleak conditions in which prisoners are incarcerated. Whether guilty or innocent, every prisoner has the fundamental right to dignity under Article 14 of the Constitution. The Supreme Court stated in the Raja Azmat case that "treatment of prisoners in overcrowded and inadequately equipped prisons profoundly affects constitutionally guaranteed rights".

Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2010. It provides in Article 10 that "all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person".

The 18th Constitutional Amendment, 2010, allows for efficient governance structures through the delegation of powers from the central government to the provincial level. Other provinces across Pakistan should draw inspiration from the pioneering prison reforms initiated by Sindh and enact reformative prison laws. The true measure of a nation can only be determined by how it treats its most marginalised members, among them those languishing in prison.

Commerce News

PM seeks comprehensive plan for increase in revenue



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a sectoral meeting regarding Ministry of Finance in Islamabad.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday directed that a comprehensive plan for increase in revenue should be prepared without putting burden on the common man.

While chairing a high level meeting on Ministry of Finance, he said in the next five years the tax to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would be taken to 15 per cent.

He said the federal government would strengthen the provinces and would hand over all the relevant ministries and departments to the

provinces, under the 18th amendment, adding expenditure would be reduced to decrease the fiscal deficit.

He directed to speed up the process of reforms and privatization of the state owned institutions especially those which were running in losses.

He said public private partnership should be initiated with private operators to improve the services at all the large airports of the country.

The prime minister said the government was fully focused on gradually decreasing the public debt,

pension and subsidy reforms and privatization of the state owned entities.

He said the conclusion of the standby programme with the International Monetary Fund was a positive development, adding the government would make full effort for the next programme with the IMF.

He said a detailed plan should also be presented for decrease in external debt.

The services of international experts should be hired for achieving economic progress, he added.

The meeting was briefed about revenue, taxes, fiscal deficit, foreign exchange reserves, remittances and current account.

The participants of the meeting were also informed about the progress on the implementation on issues of revenue, subsidies, power sector reforms and on the instructions of the prime minister to reduce government expenditure.

Federal ministers Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Dr Musadiq Malik, Ahsan Iqbal, Deputy

Govt to provide policy support to industrial sector in upcoming Budget: Jam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce and Industry Jam Kamal Khan on Thursday said that the government will provide economic and trade policy support to the business community and their suggestions will be implemented in the upcoming budget. The government is

fully aware of its responsibilities for economic and industrial competitiveness and productivity and in this regard, full support will be provided to the industrialists. The Minister for Commerce said this while addressing the Pre-Budget 2024-25 seminar arranged by Ministry of Commerce

CM's aide for increasing home municipal property tax at par with big cities

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Advisor to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister on Finance, Muzamil Aslam on Thursday expressed displeasure over excise and taxation recovery and said that annual municipal property tax on homes should be like taxes in other major cities.

He was chairing a meeting regarding reforms initiatives and tax recovery by various departments.

The meeting was also attended by Secretary Finance, Amir Khan, Additional Secretary, Abdullah, Additional Secretary Energy, Director General Excise and concerned officials.

Chairing the meeting, finance advisor said that ratio of tax is comparatively low in KP and it should be increased like other cities. He also said province needs timely and complete tax recovery.

Comprehensive measures in progress to enhance tax net: FBR

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Commissioner (Inland Revenue) Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar, Zafar Iqbal Khan has said that in consultations with the trading community comprehensive measures have been initiated to enhance the tax net.

Addressing an online open court here on Thursday, he said that due to the survey of various markets 65364 new tax payers have been registered on tax-roll till

the end of February 2024 beside the filling of voluntarily tax returns by 21600 individuals, which he termed a positive trend and encouraging progress towards the promotion of tax culture in the country.

The Chief Commissioner said that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has taken a major step for looking into the tax related matters of some specified big industries and their directors and a Large Taxpayers' Zone (LTZ).



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries & Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain chairs a meeting of the Sugar Advisory Board (SAB).

Rupee sheds 01 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Thursday witnessed a devaluation of 01 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs277.92 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.91.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.5 and Rs281 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs2.40 to close at Rs301.74 against the last-day closing of Rs299.34, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Provision of quality agricultural inputs to farmers being ensured: Ashiq Kirmani

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Agriculture Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani has said that zero tolerance policy is being implemented to provide quality agricultural inputs to the farmers as per the direction of Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz.

According to a press release issued here on Thursday, as per the direction of Punjab Agriculture Minister, Deputy Commissioner Okara Dr Zeeshan Hanif along with Director Agriculture Zulfiqar Ali Ghorri and Pesticide

Inspector Chaudhry Asim Ali raided the office of Spire Agro Chemicals and filed a case against the accused involved in various illegal packing and repacking processes, in police station Sadar Okara.

The stock on the spot was taken into custody and handed over to the police.

The said team seized a huge quantity of empty bottles, sealing machine, heat gun, weighing scales and various labels etc from the spot. The accused was arrested by the police party on the spot.

Tanveer vows to address confronted challenges in agriculture sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, who also assumed additional charge of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, on Thursday vowed to make all-out efforts for uplift of the agriculture sector, once considered backbone of the national economy.

After assuming the charge, he said Pakistan faced numerous challenges that threatened the growth and sustainability of the agriculture sector,

expressing confidence to tackle them efficiently. "Climate change, water scarcity, lack of access to modern technology and markets are just some of the issues that will be addressing in the coming days in order to realize the full potential of our agriculture sector." He said the government was committed to the growth and productivity of the agricultural sector, adding all available resources would be utilized for the development of this sector.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships namely, Chem Gallium and Alba Gascarrying Chemicals and LPG, berthed at Engro Terminal and Sui Southern Gas Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile another gas carrier 'Lian Song Hu' also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today morning.

A total of eight ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Kyparisissa and Silver left the Port on today morning.

CM KP hold meeting on irrigation, introducing modern irrigation system

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur Thursday held an important meeting of the Irrigation Department and assigned them new tasks to introduce a modern irrigation system in the province.

He directed the construction of artificial dams to make maximum barren land cultivable in the province besides introducing a system of cluster tube wells for artificial dams. The research process in the agriculture sector should be made productive, the CM said.

Making the province self-sufficient in agricultural commodities is

the top priority of the provincial government, the Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur told the meeting. For this purpose, he said important projects should be worked on to irrigate millions of acres of barren land in the southern districts.

He said that the CRBC Lift Canal Project is a very important project in this regard and realistic data regarding small dams and command areas should be compiled in the province. He told the meeting that development projects capable of generating maximum revenue in the irrigation sector should be given first priority.

He said that steps

should be taken to provide maximum facilities to the farmers and the GIS system should be used for the collection of water and other related taxes. The Chief Minister said that punishments and fines should be increased to prevent water theft and other illegal activities.

The irrigation department should pay special attention to digitize all its affairs, Ali Amin Gandapur told the meeting. Set timelines in contracts for all works department development projects and penalties should be imposed on the contractor in case of non-progress on the contracts within the stipulated timelines, the CM warned.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman cutting the cake during Iftar dinner organized by Pakistan Youth Parliament in honour of children belonging to different Sweet Homes at Governor House Lahore.

Punjab Governor says: Sweet Homes children should study diligently and become great person

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that human greatness does not lie in wealth or money but in good character. He was speaking on the occasion of Iftar dinner organized by Pakistan Youth Parliament in honour of children belonging to different Sweet Homes at Governor House Lahore. Members of Pakistan Youth Parliament and others were also present on the occasion.

Punjab Governor, Muhammad Balighur Rehman while addressing the children said that you are on your way to a better and brighter future, you should study diligently and become a great person.

Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that he welcomes the young guests at the Governor's House. He said that you should get education and become a great person. Addressing the children, Governor Punjab asked them to develop high moral values in themselves.

He said that the world is a testing place. In every person's life there are also some shortcomings. But we should thank Allah Almighty in every situation.

Health Minister meets Deputy Director Bill Gates Foundation for polio

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Deputy Director of Polio for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael Galway met with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah at his office on Thursday.

Special Secretary Health for Polio Eradication, Abdul Basit was also present at the meeting. During the meeting, there was an exchange of views regarding potential upcoming visits of the High-Level Polio Oversight Board in May.

Representative from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation commended Pakistan's efforts in polio eradication. He engaged in special discussions with the Health Minister about the measures taken to contain the poliovirus in southern regions. Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah and Michael Galway agreed to take concrete steps to combat the polio virus, which is being transmitted from Afghanistan.

ZAB is still alive in hearts of people: Babar

By Tanveer Ahmed Soomro
MIRPUR MATHELO: Those who erased Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were themselves erased. Bhutto is still alive today but there is no one to take the names of those who erased them, expressed these views on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, President of Pakistan People's Party Ghotki district. Mir Babar Ali Khan Lound, Vice Chairman of District Council Ghotki, addressed a function.

He said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a great leader who sacrificed his life for the survival of Pakistan. 45 years have passed but Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is still alive in the hearts of the people.

On April 14, Garhi Khuda Bakhsh caravans will depart from all over the country. A large number of workers will reach the meeting place from Ghotki. A working committee meeting was called by Mir Babar Ali Khan Lound on April 4 at Lound House, Pakistan People's Party District Ghotki officials participated in the meeting and in the organized ceremony, the leader of the people, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was honored. Quran recitation was arranged.

Corrupt invigilators should be sent behind bars: Minister Bilal Yasin

Independent Report
LAHORE: A meeting of the Cabinet Committee to investigate the cheating in exams issue and other irregularities in the ongoing examination process in Punjab was held at the Punjab Assembly Committee Room, here on Thursday. The meeting, chaired by Provincial Minister Bilal Yasin, was attended by Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat, Education Secretary, Additional Secretary Home,

DIG Special Branch and officers from different education boards. In the meeting, serious concern was expressed over the irregularities during the recent examinations.

Bilal Yasin, head of the cabinet committee, said all institutions and individuals involved in the examination process should mend their ways and be more vigilant. Reports of cheating and serious irregularities in the examination process were emerging from several districts.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal, Sohail Shaukat Butt, distributes Eid gifts among the staff of the Social Welfare Department.

Minister stresses cleaning of ponds to save underground water

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Local Governments Department Minister Zeeshan Rafique has said that through collective efforts, the government will be able to provide a safe environment for future generations by keeping the underground water clean.

The Punjab Municipal Development Fund Company (PMDFC), in collaboration with UNICEF, has successfully completed a model project for cleaning waste water ponds in Sheikhpura. The plan to make sewage water reservoirs reusable will be extended in a phased manner.

He was addressing a seminar, organised under the auspices of the PMDFC at the GOR Officers' Mess, as the chief guest. Special Secretary Local Government Department Asia Gul, Managing Director PMDFC Syed Zahid Aziz, research experts and teachers of various educational institutions also participated.

Minister urges politicians to prioritise national interests over conspiracy politics

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Health and Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique has emphasised the need for politicians to focus on national welfare rather than indulging in conspiracy politics.

During his address at the opening ceremony of the Provincial Stroke Management Centre at Services Institute of Medical Sciences Auditorium here on Thursday, he highlighted the critical state of affairs in Pakistan, likening it to a

wartime scenario and stressing the importance of unity and dedication to public service. He denounced favoritism within the Punjab Health Department, asserting a firm stance against nepotism.

Praising the efforts of healthcare professionals in alleviating people's suffering, Salman Rafique acknowledged the costly nature of stroke treatment and applauded the launch of the Provincial Stroke Management Center project as a significant step forward.

Jinnah House attack: ATC grants bail to 39 accused

Independent Report
LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday granted post-arrest bail to 39 accused involved in the Jinnah House attack case of May 9 riots. The court ordered the accused to furnish surety bonds of Rs 100,000 each to avail the relief of bail. Duty Judge Arshad Javed heard the post-arrest bail petitions of the accused and announced the verdict upon completion of arguments by the parties. The accused who were granted bail are: Nadir Mehmood, Shan Ali, Muhammad Afzal, Yar Gull, Owais Ali, Muhammad Irshad, Waqar Jameel, Zeeshan Butt, Kashif Khan.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health Khawaja Salman Rafique inaugurates Provincial Stroke Management Centre at Services Institute of Medical Sciences.

International News

Nato marks 75th anniversary with warnings of renewed Russian threat

Monitoring Desk
BRUSSELS: Nato foreign ministers celebrated the alliance's 75th anniversary on Thursday to warnings that Moscow was as great a threat as ever and concern over stalled US aid for Ukraine in its war against Russia.

"Nato's biggest battles to fight are still in the future, and we have to be ready for them," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis told reporters at Nato headquarters in Brussels, where a ceremony with birthday cake and marching bands could not mask the sombre mood.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who met his Nato counterparts there, urged the

32 member states to provide his country with new additional air defence systems, especially US-made Patriot missiles.

"I didn't want to spoil the birthday party for Nato, but I felt compelled to deliver a very sobering message on behalf of Ukrainians about the state of Russian air attacks on my country," he told a press conference.

Overnight Thursday, a Russian drone attack struck residential buildings in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv and an energy facility in the region, killing several people and cutting power for 350,000 residents, Ukrainian officials said.

Kuleba said the Nato ministers had agreed to

identify and find air defence systems in their arsenals to send to Ukraine.

Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the United States, where an aid package for Ukraine worth some \$60 billion is blocked in Congress, needed its allies more than ever with the conflict that started with Russia's invasion of Ukraine now in its third year.

"Europe needs North America for its security," Stoltenberg said at the ceremony.

"At the same time, North America also needs Europe. European allies provide world-class militaries, vast intelligence networks and unique diplomatic leverage, multiplying America's might."



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks next to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and U.S. Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith as they attend a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, in Brussels, Belgium.

Palestine revives bid to become UN member

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: Palestine on Tuesday officially revived their bid for a full member state in the United Nations — a process with an uncertain outcome but one they say is necessary in the face of Israel's offensive in Gaza.

The Palestinians, who have had observer status at the world body since 2012, have lobbied for years to gain full membership, which would amount to recognition of Palestinian statehood.

In a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, dated Tuesday and seen by AFP, UN envoy Riyad Mansour requested "upon instructions of the Palestinian leadership" that an application dating back to 2011 be re-considered.

The letter has been transmitted to the Security Council, and the Palestinians have asked that it be reviewed this month, according to the documents seen by AFP.

Mansour has repeatedly said in recent months that given Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip since October 7, UN membership is a priority for the Palestinians.

Biden speaks with Israel's Netanyahu after strike kills food aid workers

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday, three days after Israel launched an attack that killed seven World Central Kitchen aid workers in Gaza, according to a source familiar with the matter. The White House has described Biden as outraged and heartbroken by the attack but the president has made no fundamental change in Washington's steadfast support for Israel in its conflict against Palestinian Hamas militants.

Macron says he has no doubt Russia will target Paris Olympics

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday that he had no doubt Russia would malevolently target the Paris Olympics this summer.

"I have no doubt whatsoever, including in terms of information," Macron said in response to a reporter's question about whether he thought that Russia would try to target the Olympics.

Macron's comments, delivered at an event in Paris for the inauguration of the new Olympic Aquatic Centre, represent his most explicit acknowledgement to date of foreign threats to the security or smooth running of the games.

The Games will take place amid a complex global backdrop, with Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's military campaign in Gaza complicating efforts to safeguard the Olympics.

Macron has in past months adopted a tougher stance against Russia, vowing that Moscow must be defeated, and has not ruled out that European troops may one day go to Ukraine, although he has made clear that France has no intention of instigating hostilities against Russia.

His government has also adopted a tougher line against alleged Russian disinformation efforts across Europe.

Earlier this week, Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne said France will propose EU-wide level sanctions on those behind spreading disinformation amid what Paris sees as growing efforts by Russia to destabilise the bloc.

Hamas official says no progress in ceasefire talks

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Hamas official Osama Hamdan said on Thursday there has been no progress in Gaza ceasefire talks despite the Palestinian group showing flexibility.

Hamdan said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was placing obstacles hindering both parties from reaching an agreement, and that he is "not interested" in releasing Israeli hostages.

"The occupation government is still evading, and negotiations are stuck in a vicious circle," Hamdan said at a press conference held in Beirut.

Egyptian and Qatari efforts, backed by the United States, have so far failed to achieve a ceasefire.

While Hamas wants any ceasefire agreement to secure an end to the Israeli military offensive, Israel prefers a prisoners-for-hostage release deal, refusing to commit to ending its military campaign.

In Gaza, Israeli bombardment continued to target areas across the Palestinian enclave, killing 62 people in the past 24 hours, the territory's health ministry said.

The Israeli military released 101 Palestinians who had been detained by forces during the ground offensive in the past weeks and months. The detainees, many of whom complained of ill-treatment in Israeli jails, were freed through the Israeli Kerem Shalom crossing into the southern Gaza Strip. More than 33,037 Palestinians have been killed and 75,668 have been injured in Israel's military offensive on Gaza since Oct 7, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement on Thursday.



French President Emmanuel Macron talks to children after their swimming performance during the inauguration of the Olympic Aquatics Centre (CAO), a multifunctional venue for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games construction site which is under the management of the "Metropole Grand Paris" in Saint-Denis, near Paris, France.

Russian minister casts prospective Ukraine peace talks as Western plot to win hesitant Global South

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia's top diplomat warned Thursday that prospective negotiations to end the fighting in Ukraine could be successful only if they take Moscow's interests into account, dismissing a planned round of peace talks as a Western ruse to rally broader international

support for Kyiv.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov charged that Ukraine's Western allies are currently involved in a massive diplomatic blitz to persuade as many countries of the Global South as possible to join a meeting in Switzerland to discuss a potential peace plan.

Police said they seized flats, villas, Rolex watches, Cartier jewellery, gold, cryptocurrencies and luxury cars such as a Lamborghini and a Porsche, in addition to some 600 million euros worth of illegitimate tax credits for home improvements.

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"I have no doubt whatsoever, including in terms of information," Macron said in response to a reporter's question about whether he thought that Russia would try to target the Olympics. Macron's comments, delivered at an event in Paris for the inauguration of the new

Israel boosts defences after Iran revenge threat

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: The Israeli military halted leave for all combat units on Thursday amid concerns of a possible escalation in violence after the killing of Iranian generals in Damascus this week drew threats of retaliation. "In accordance with the situational assessment, it has been decided that leave will be temporarily paused for all IDF (Israel Defence Forces) combat units," the military said in a statement.

PM calls for immediate end to genocidal war against innocent Palestinians

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday strongly condemning the ongoing Israeli brutalities in Gaza that had continued relentlessly since October 7, 2023, called for an immediate end to the genocidal war against the brave and innocent Palestinian people.

He was talking to Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan Ahmed Jawad A.A. Rabei who called on him here.

He said Pakistan had a historic and close relationship with the brotherly State of Palestine and it had consistently supported the Palestine cause, at the UN, OIC as well as other international platforms.

He expressed deep condolences over the tragic

death of over 32,000 Palestinians, including 17,000 children, as well as more than 70,000 injured by the brutal actions of Israeli security forces.

The prime minister recalled the interim ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case filed by South Africa and stated that Pakistan had also made a verbal statement in support of Palestine at the ICJ.

While welcoming the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2728, the prime minister expressed disappointment that Israel had chosen to ignore the resolution and continued to brazenly violate it.

He assured the Palestinian Ambassador that Pakistan would continue to raise its voice at every in-

ternational forum in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Pakistan has so far, sent seven tranches of relief goods for the people of Gaza. Another tranche is planned soon after Eid.

The Palestinian Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister and the people of Pakistan for supporting the Palestinian people, which was a source of strength for them at this difficult time.

The prime minister thanked President of Palestine Dr. Mahmoud Abbas for his warm congratulatory message to him following his re-election.

The prime minister was assisted by Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, SAPM Tariq Fatemi and the Foreign Secretary.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, calls on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan aim to boost economic ties, seeking finalization of PTA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Azerbaijan on Thursday aimed to boost economic and trade ties by seeking finalization of a bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to increase the bilateral trade between both of countries.

Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, met here on Thursday to discuss bolstering economic cooperation between the two nations, according to a press release issued here.

Minister Jam Kamal reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening commercial and economic ties, emphasizing the importance of people-to-people contact and the signing of the PTA to bolster trade volume and create new business

opportunities.

Highlighting the historical, political, and economic ties shared by Pakistan and Azerbaijan, Minister Jam Kamal emphasized the need to extend bilateral trade to its true potential by addressing trade-related issues.

Minister Jam Kamal noted the increase in exports to Azerbaijan from US\$ 9.70 million in 2021-22 to US\$ 12.08 million in 2022-23, alongside a significant rise in imports primarily due to fertilizers. Both countries are actively negotiating a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), with finalized drafts.

Ambassador Khazar Farhadov stressed the importance of high-level visits to enhance bilateral relations and elevate trilateral cooperation with Turkey.

Silence is best policy in present situation: Rasheed

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former interior minister and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad said on Thursday that silence was the best policy in the current circumstances.

Talking to the media outside a court here, where he had gone in connection with the hearing of a case against him, he said it was his opinion that one should deal with the situation by remaining calm and tightlipped.

Rasheed said he had accepted his defeat in the February 8 general elections.

Replying to a question about the threatening letters received by the high courts and the Supreme Court (SC) judges, the former interior minister said it was a sensitive matter. "It is better not to talk much about it," he added.

UN to take up Pakistan's resolution on banning arms sales to Israel

UNITED NATION (INP): In an upcoming session scheduled for Friday, the United Nations will address a resolution proposed by Pakistan aimed at banning arms sales to Israel.

The draft of this resolution, submitted by Pakistan to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on behalf of 55 member countries of the United Nations, has stirred significant anticipation and debate within the international community.

The comprehensive eight-page resolution places forth stringent demands on Israel, calling for an immediate end to its occupation of Palestinian territories and Gaza. One of the key provisions of the resolution is the demand for Israel to cease its illegal blockade on

the Gaza Strip.

Moreover, the resolution underscores the urgency of preventing the sale or transfer of explosives and other military equipment to Israel, emphasizing the need to curb the proliferation of arms that exacerbates the ongoing conflict in the region.

The proposal has garnered widespread support from the majority of OIC member countries, reflecting a collective effort to address the longstanding humanitarian and security concerns stemming from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The resolution symbolizes a unified stance against the injustices and violations of international law perpetrated by Israel, particularly in its treatment of the Palestinian population.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in a meeting with Iranian Parliamentary Delegation at Parliament House.

NA Speaker says: Enhancing trade, business, energy cooperation pivotal for deepening historically strong Pak-Iran ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly of Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Thursday said that Pakistan and Iran enjoy historically strong bilateral ties which are based on shared values, similar culture, same religion and being neighbouring countries.

He reaffirmed his commitment for extending parliamentary support to further deepen these ties by supporting cooperation in

energy, trade, business and especially by creating synergy among private sectors of both nations said a news release.

Speaker expressed these views during a meeting with Iranian Parliamentary Delegation led by Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy along with Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam at Parliament House.

While emphasizing the need for streamlining cooperation in private sector, the speaker said that both nations have vast opportunities in enhancing trade and business by managing border markets, increasing import-export volume, resolving IPP Gas pipe line issues, working on Gawadar-Chabahar as sister projects and by bringing parliament of both nations closer.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power, Awais Khan Leghari in a meeting with ADB Country Director Young Ye.

LHC suspends victory notification of Qayyum from NA-81 Gujranwala

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday suspended the victory notification of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) leader Azhar Qayyum from NA-81 Gujranwala.

Justice Shahid Karim passed the orders on a petition filed by Sunni Ittehad Council's candidate Bilal Ijaz Chaudhry challenging the notification for Azhar Qayyum's victory.

The petitioner's counsel

argued before the court that his client was declared successful from NA-81 by a margin of 8000 votes, but the Election Commission declared Azhar Qayyum successful in a vote recount. He submitted that the returning officer reduced 2500 votes of his client in recounting. He pleaded with the court to set aside the notification for victory of respondent and suspend the same until the final decision of the petition.

Iran proposes to release Pakistani prisoners

ISLAMABAD (APP): An Iranian delegation on Thursday called on Minister for Law and Justice senator Azam Nazeer Tarrar to discuss issues of mutual interests.

The delegation was led by Dr. Askar Galailan, Deputy Justice Minister for Human Rights and International Affairs. Matters of mutual interest were discussed in the meeting.

Iranian delegation said

that there are currently 160 Pakistani prisoners in Iran's jails and 60 Iranian prisoners are in custody in Pakistan. Considering the plight of their loved ones, the relatives of the imprisoned Pakistanis, the delegation proposed to release them.

They suggested that in the first phase, the prisoners would be released on humanitarian grounds and sent back to Pakistan.

DC for effective tackling begging, inflation, urban chaos in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review the performance of Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates in the Federal Capital during Ramadan and orchestrated a roadmap for a more efficient and responsive administration. According to the Spokesman

of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabassum, the recent gathering aimed at gauging the effectiveness of Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates in Islamabad.

The meeting, graced by a multitude of officials and stakeholders, witnessed a thorough briefing session by Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates regarding their operational endeavors.

Pak condemns terror attacks in Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Thursday unequivocally condemned the heinous and dastardly terrorist attacks and security installations in the cities of Rask and Chabahar in Iran.

In a statement, the Foreign Office said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and pray for the recovery of the injured. Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the people and Government of Iran in fighting terrorism."

"Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and is deeply concerned about the growing acts of terrorism in our region. It is a regional and global threat that requires resolute response," it concluded.

ECP refuses JUL-F candidate's plea for recounting vote in NA-266

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) refused the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) candidate's plea for a vote recount in NA-266 (Kila Abdullah-Chum Chaman) on Thursday.

Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai won the NA-266 seat with 67,028 votes, while JUI-F's Salahuddin, could only receive 58,439 votes, in the elections.

The ECP also refused the request for vote re-verification at 36 polling stations.

AIOU begins exam of BA, B.Ed from April 23

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is conducting examinations of Associate degree (B.A., B.Com), BBA, B.Ed, and BS programs offered in the autumn 2023 semester from April 23, 2023, throughout the country.

The date sheet is available on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) and roll number slips are uploaded to students' CMS portals.

PR instructed to tighten security in trains, at stations during Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways Police has issued instructions to all Superintendent of Police (SP) Railways to tighten security in trains as well as at stations to avoid any untoward incident during Eid-ul-Fitr days.

The department had directed all SPs Railways to depute sufficient force at exit and entry points of all railway stations and strict watch to be carried out of suspicious persons, an official in the Ministry told APP. Pakistan Railways Police Commando Force

would be deputed at vulnerable installations and in trains, while bomb disposal staff would also be kept on alert for search of luggage and passengers at railway stations. "The SPs Railways directed to conduct complete check and search of empty racks before trains reach the platforms for departure for their destinations," the official added.

All the SPs Railways would also be directed to remain present on Eid holidays and randomly check trains, stations and escorting staff, the official added.

Pakistan, Japan sign two projects in weather surveillance, health sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Japan on Thursday signed two Japanese grant-in-aid projects in the sectors of weather forecasting and surveillance; mother and child healthcare.

The Notes of the projects were signed and exchanged by Secretary of Economic Affairs Division (EAD) Dr Kazim Niaz and Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan WADA Mitsuhiro on behalf of their respective governments at a ceremony held here.

Whereas, the Grant Agreements were signed by EAD Joint Secretary Saeed Ashraf Siddiqi and Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Pakistan Naooki MIYATA, a news release said.

Japan has provided additional grant amounting to of ¥832 million (US\$ 5.4 million) for 'Installation of Weather Surveillance Radar in Sukkur City' and ¥671 million (US\$ 4.4 million) for 'the Extension of Maternal and Child Health Care Facilities in Sindh' to Pakistan through JICA.

These grant-in-aid projects are aimed to improve the Pakistan Meteorological Department's capabilities in meteorological observation, weather forecasting and dissemination of forecast/warnings besides strengthening medical services in the children hospital.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Khazar Farhadov of Azerbaijan presents souvenir to Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan.

CDA to set up 'biggest IT park'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to create the country's biggest Information Technology Park (IT Park) through a public-private partnership.

With the approval of CDA Board, a plot measuring 3.3 acres has been allocated in Sector G-10 for the IT Park, which would be a unique project of its kind.

The plot would have a total covered area of

100,000 square feet, where 5,000 to 6,000 freelancers would be able to work simultaneously. The IT Park would have a working space for freelancers and startups, software houses, a library, and a research centre. Private IT companies would bear the expenses of the construction of the IT Park, which would also have their offices on rent. However, the IT Park would be handed over to the CDA.

Islamabad Capital Police says: Overcharging on Eid will not be tolerated

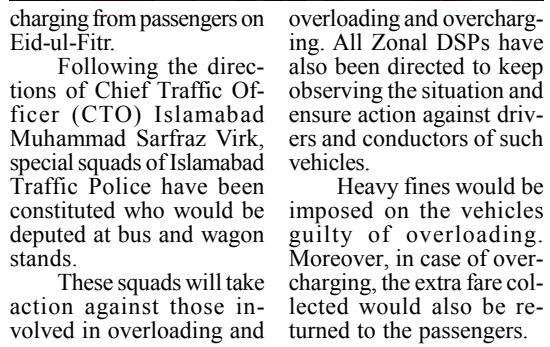
ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police have decided to accelerate action against those public service and passenger vehicles involved in overloading and overcharging from passengers on Eid-ul-Fitr.

Following the directions of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, special squads of Islamabad Traffic Police have been constituted who would be deputed at bus and wagon stands.

These squads will take action against those involved in overloading and

overcharging and overcharging. All Zonal DSPs have also been directed to keep observing the situation and ensure action against drivers and conductors of such vehicles.

Heavy fines would be imposed on the vehicles guilty of overloading. Moreover, in case of overcharging, the extra fare collected would also be returned to the passengers.



ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police officers inspecting a vehicle for overloading.

PUC to observe 'Peace for Palestine Day' on Friday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) has decided to observe Friday as 'Peace for Palestine Day' to raise awareness about the core issue and advocating for a peaceful resolution of the lingering dispute.

Under the leadership of PUC Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, religious scholars and leaders across Pakistan are set to address the Palestine crisis during their Friday sermons.

Speaking to the media, Ashrafi emphasized the urgent need for world powers to intervene and halt the ongoing atrocities perpetrated by Israeli forces against innocent Palestinian people.

He underscored the importance of resolving the conflict through peaceful means, urging diplomatic efforts to ensure justice and stability in the region.

IHC orders to remove name of Shireen from ECL

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ordered to remove the name of former federal minister Shireen Mazari from Exit Control List (ECL).

The petition of PTI former leader Shireen Mazari seeking removal of her name from ECL came up for hearing before Justice Samman Rifat Iltiaz for hearing Thursday.

Shireen Mazari appeared in the court along with her counsel.

Unregistered sellers must register by April 30: FBR

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Spokesperson on Thursday said that all unregistered wholesalers, retailers, dealers and all shopkeepers must register by 30 April 2024 under Trader Friendly Scheme.

He said that already registered shopkeepers don't need to re-register for the Scheme.



ISLAMABAD: The launching ceremony of Pakistan Non Formal Education Annual Statistical Report 2021-22 jointly organized by Pakistan Institute for Education-PIE, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training & JICA-AQAL Project at Allama Iqbal Open University.