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India ordered assassination of 20 individuals in Pakistan; reports UK publication

Indian network of extra-territorial killings 'global phenomenon', needs coordinated response: FO

GENEVA (APP): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office ordered the assassination of individuals in neighbouring Pakistan, according to a report in The Guardian quoting Indian and Pakistani intelligence operatives.

The British newspaper said that the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), an agency that is directly controlled by PM Modi's office, had undertaken the strategy to "eliminate (alleged) terrorists living on foreign soil".

The accounts, according to the report, gives further weight to allegations that New Delhi has implemented a policy of targeting those it considers hostile to India. While the new allegations refer to individuals

charged with serious and violent terror offences, India has also been accused publicly by Canada of involvement in the murders of dissident figures including a Sikh activist in Canada and a botched assassination attempt on another Sikh leader in the United States last year.

The fresh claims relate to almost 20 killings since 2020, carried out by unknown gunmen in Pakistan. The Guardian pointed out, noting this is the first time Indian intelligence personnel have discussed the alleged operations in Pakistan, and detailed documentation has been seen alleging Raw's direct involvement in the assassinations.

According to Pakistani

investigators, these deaths were orchestrated by Indian intelligence sleeper-cells mostly operating out of the United Arab Emirates. The rise in killings in 2023 was credited to the increased activity of these cells, which are accused of paying millions of rupees to local criminals or poor Pakistanis to carry out the assassinations. Indian agents also allegedly recruited 'jihadists' to carry out the shootings, making them believe they were killing "infidels", the report said.

This was the case in the killing of Sikh leader in Pakistan, Paramjit Singh Panjwar, who was shot dead in Lahore in May.

INP adds: Pakistan's Foreign Office stated on Friday that the Indian net-

work of extrajudicial and extra-territorial killings has now become a global concern that requires a coordinated international response.

The FO statement follows a report published by The Guardian on Thursday which states that the Indian government assassinated individuals in Pakistan.

India has denied the claims made in the report.

A spokesperson for the Foreign Office said that Foreign Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi, on January 25, shared credible evidence of the involvement of Indian agents in the killings of two Pakistani citizens on Pakistani soil.

"These cases exposed the increasing sophistica-

tion and brazenness of Indian-sponsored terrorist acts inside Pakistan, with striking similarities to the pattern observed in other countries, including Canada and the United States," the spox said in a statement.

India's assassination of Pakistani nationals on Pakistani soil constitutes a clear violation of the country's sovereignty and a breach of the UN Charter, the spokesperson said.

"It is critical to bring to justice the perpetrators, facilitators, financiers and sponsors of these extrajudicial and extraterritorial killings. India must be held accountable internationally for its blatant violation of international law," the spokesperson concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding security situation in the country.

PM directs for fool-proof security of Chinese nationals

Directs interior ministry to increase collaboration with the provinces to further improve the provincial anti-terrorism departments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed all the security agencies to ensure fool-proof security arrangements for the Chinese nationals working on various projects in Pakistan.

Chairing a meeting regarding security situation in the country, the prime minister said he had decided to personally review the meetings with respect to the overall security of the country especially the security of the Chinese citizens.

He said war against the menace of terrorism will continue till its eradication from the country. He directed the interior ministry to increase collaboration with the provinces to further improve the provincial anti-terrorism departments.

The prime minister also instructed to chalk out a comprehensive strategy for the regular audit of the security SOPs.

The interior ministry briefed the prime minister in detail about the overall law and order situation of the country and the performance of the ministry.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Naqvi, top brass of the security agencies and the concerned high officials.

Practical steps to be taken for media houses, workers' welfare: Tarar

KARACHI (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar reiterated the government's resolve to address all the issues being faced by journalists, media workers and media houses on priority.

He expressed the resolve during his separate meetings with the office bearers of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors and Pakistan Broadcasters Association. On the occasion, he vowed to take practical steps for ensuring well-being of the media workers and houses.

The minister, during the meetings, had a detailed discussion on the problems faced by media workers, journalists and newspaper industry.

Tarar said he was fully aware of the problems of media workers and journalists and would take practical measures to protect their rights. Besides, all-out efforts would be made to provide required facilities to them, he added.

The minister assured

the office bearers of his full cooperation in getting the pending dues of media houses cleared at the earliest possible time.

In this regard, concerted efforts were underway in line with the direc-

government, journalists and media houses.

He said health cards for medical treatment of journalists would be issued soon. Nobody would be allowed to violate rights of journalists and media work-



KARACHI: Mr. Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting in a meeting with office-bearers of APNS.

tives of PM Shehbaz Sharif, he added. e said the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) had approved supplementary grant for payment of media houses' arrears and dues.

The minister highlighted the role being played by the Ministry of Information between the

ers, he remarked. He also spoke on economic issues and expressed the government's strong commitment to address those issues in line with the vision of PM Shehbaz Sharif. He said work on digitization of Federal Board of Revenue had been initiated to ensure documented economy.

Arsenic mixed in powder found in letters sent to SC, IHC judges: CTD

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) has disclosed that forensic analysis of the powder found in the suspicious letters sent to Islamabad High Court judges has revealed the presence of arsenic. This revelation has raised serious alarms.

According to reliable sources within the CTD, the forensic report revealed that the powder contained a 15% arsenic

concentration. Arsenic, known for its toxicity and lethal effects, poses a severe threat to human health, particularly affecting the nervous system.

The CTD is set to submit this critical forensic report to the Supreme Court within the next three to four days. Moreover, CTD investigators have obtained CCTV footage from the sub-divisional post office of the Satellite Town, capturing potential suspects

near the letter boxes from where the letters were potentially posted to the judges. Utilizing advanced identification methods, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) is actively engaged in identifying individuals featured in the footage. In light of these developments, the CTD has initiated investigations targeting individuals deemed suspicious based on the CCTV footage.

Law minister emphasizes on role of committees to assist needy litigants

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Friday emphasized on active role of legal aid committees to provide legal assistance to deserving litigants.

The law minister said that legal aid committees at the district level could play a role to support the poor and needy people for their access to justice. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar held a meeting with a delegation of Punjab Bar Council. Chairman Reforms Committee Rana Tufail Ahmed Noon and Chairman Executive Punjab Bar Council were also part of delegation.

The meeting discussed the ideas of jail reforms and the provision of free legal aid to needy prisoners.

Ambassador of Japan calls on Minister for Defence

RAWALPINDI (Online): Wada Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan called on Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif in Islamabad Friday.

Minister for Defence expressed that Pakistan-Japan diplomatic, military and economic relations are based on the principles of goodwill and mutual trust for each other.



He desired that Japan would help create economic activities in Pakistan as well as bring investment in maritime and industrial manufacturing sectors.

Minister also commended the efforts of Japanese Government for regular holding of Pakistan-Japan Politico-Military and Military to Military Dialogues, adding that such interactions are a concrete expression of the desire of both the countries to enhance mutual defence collaboration.

The visiting dignitary assured his Government's continued support to Pakistan and to exploring new avenues of mutual collaboration.

CJCSC briefs President about security situation, armed forces' preparedness

President lauds army's role in "defending national frontiers as well as their contributions towards socio-economic development"

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Sahir Shamsah Mirza on Friday called on President Asif Ali Zardari and briefed him about the security situation of the country as well as the operational preparedness of the armed forces.

In the meeting, the CJCSC also highlighted that the armed forces of the country had the capability to effectively deal with internal and external security challenges, according to a President House press release.

President Zardari

Julie Kozack says

IMF ready for new loan program with Pakistan resolving fiscal challenges

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) spokesperson Julie Kozack in a monthly press briefing the IMF authorities have expressed interest in a successor IMF-supported program with the aim of resolving Pakistan's fiscal and external stability challenges and laying the foundation for inclusive growth.

The IMF spokesperson said that of course, IMF stands ready to engage in program discussions in the coming months.

The spokeswoman of the international lender gave an overview of rounds held between Pakistan and IMF and said: "So, on March 19, IMF staff and the Pakistani authorities reached staff-level agreement on the second and final review under Pakistan's Stand-By Arrangement, SBA."



LARKANA: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing the Iftar organized in honor of Polling Agents, Polling Incharge and Constituency dignitaries of NA 194 Provincial Constituency PS 11 at Bhutto House Naudero.

Imran strongly condemns Israel's genocide in Gaza

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman-for-life Imran Khan has strongly condemned Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza and called

upon the Muslim leadership to take an effective lead as the people of Gaza are counting on the Ummah to speak up and act.

In a message from Adiala Jail, PTI Founding Chairman vowed: "I stand with Gaza." "I continue to strongly condemn Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza in which over 40,000 innocent Palestinians have

been killed and many others are being deliberately starved to death," he added.

Imran Khan stated that despite people across the world demanding an immediate ceasefire, the power-law continue to remain unmoved as all humanitarian laws, laws of war, the UN Genocide Convention, the Geneva and Vienna Conventions continue to be violated with impunity by Israel.

"It is high time world leaders not only call for an immediate, total ceasefire but ensure its implementation also," he urged.

UK desires to promote ties with Pakistan in various fields

ISLAMABAD (Online): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has emphasized the formulation of a common strategy to cope with terrorism, which is an international phenomenon.

standing ties with Britain. He said the role of the Pakistani community in Britain in the development of both countries is commendable. He stressed the need for exchange of delegations



Talking to the British high commissioner Jane Marriott in Islamabad today, he said Pakistan is the only country which has made immense sacrifices in the war on terrorism. He said Pakistan Army and security agencies have created a story of courage and bravery in this war. He said the terrorists will not be allowed to disturb law and order situation.

The Interior Minister said Pakistan attaches great importance to its long

for promotion of bilateral relations. The Interior Minister said all possible steps are being taken to prevent human trafficking.

The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in diverse fields.

They also discussed cricket series between Pakistan and England.

The British High Commissioner expressed desire to promote cooperation with Pakistan in various fields.

PPP nominates Yusuf Raza Gilani for Senate chairman

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) on Thursday nominated former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani as its candidate for the prized slot of Senate chairman.

A notification in this regard has been issued by Jamil Soomro, political secretary to PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

As per an agreement between the PPP and PML-N, the post of president, Senate chairman and gover-

norship of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were given to the PPP, while the posts of Senate deputy chairman, National Assembly speaker and governorship of Sindh and Balochistan were given to the PML-N.

At the moment, Gilani has the support of 24 senators from the PPP, 19 from PML-N, four from BAP, three from ANP, three independents and one from the National Party, taking the tally to 54.



KARACHI: The Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf called on the Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah at Chief Minister House.

Pak, US vow to strengthen bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, received a telephone call from the United States Secretary of State, Antony Blinken here on Friday and discussed bilateral ties.

Both sides reiterated their dedication to strengthening bilateral cooperation across all spheres of mutual interest. A wide range of bilateral issues including enhancing trade and investment relations, climate change, agriculture and security came under discussion. Various matters of regional importance such as situation in Gaza, the Red Sea and developments in Afghanistan were also discussed.

Both sides expressed satisfaction at the current positive momentum in bilateral relations.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Failed experiment

As Pakistan calibrates its response to the ongoing wave of terrorism, a strange but familiar suggestion has come from across the western border. Speaking recently at an iftar in Khost, Mohammad Nabi Omari, Afghanistan's deputy interior minister, called for talks between the banned TTP and the government of Pakistan.

While the regime in Kabul is long believed to have favoured this option, few top Afghan Taliban leaders have said so publicly. While advising both Islamabad and the 'brothers' in the TTP, Mr Omari observed that Al Qaeda was not active in his country. He also felt that the war between the TTP and Pakistan was unwinnable, and that the 'brothers' could continue their campaign for "100 years" and not see any results. The Foreign Office, meanwhile, has rejected the prospect of negotiations with the TTP.

Perhaps the Afghan minister's suggestion is the result of the Taliban's frustration with the TTP. "We have nothing to do with it," he observed, ostensibly referring to TTP terrorism, "but we are getting the heat for it".

From Pakistan's perspective, talks with the TTP have already been tried; the 'ceasefire' collapsed in November 2022, and thereafter the terrorist outfit unleashed a wave of deadly violence against this country that continues. In fact, many observers have said that the TTP used the previous cessation of hostilities to regroup, and the PTI-led government at the time has been chided for letting militants return to their former stomping grounds in KP.

Indeed, Pakistan cannot afford a 'forever' war with the TTP or any other terrorist group. But negotiations must take place from a position of strength, and no compromises can be made on fundamentals such as supremacy of the Constitution. There is little to suggest that the TTP is willing to abide within this framework. Their earlier demands included amnesty for those accused of heinous terrorist violence, and reversal of Fata's merger with KP. Meeting both these demands would be akin to a surrender by the state, as they would involve forgiving the killers of thousands of Pakistanis, and reversing a constitutional amendment on the demand of those who have no respect for the Constitution.

If lower-ranking cadres of the TTP, who have committed no crimes, wish to surrender, the option could be considered, and these elements would have to be de-radicalised. But unconditionally embracing the TTP's leadership would be a huge mistake. Instead of promoting talks with the TTP, the Afghan Taliban should ensure that their 'brothers' do not attack Pakistan.

For the government, the only acceptable option would be for the TTP to lay down their arms, and for those involved in acts of terrorism to face the law. The failed experiment of negotiations on the TTP's terms should not be repeated.

ASER's verdict

Zubeida Mustafa

When Gen Charles Napier conquered Sindh in 1843, he sent a single-word message to his bosses in London. It read, "Peccavi", a Latin word that translates to 'I have sinned'. This was a pun.

More than 180 years later, we learn that Sindh has been 'sinned' against once more. How else would you describe the failure of those who control the destiny of this province to empower its children by educating them? This is no exaggeration. A look at the Annual Status of Education Report [ASER] 2023 is enough to inform the reader about the miserable state of education in the province.

ASER is an independent citizens-led group that has been testing children in Pakistan every year since 2008-09 and its results are credible. In 2023, over 1,53,000 children were tested in 274 districts. The findings are shocking.

As has been ASER's practice, students of Grade III and above were tested by being asked to read a story in Urdu/Sindhi and a sentence in English, and solve a two-digit division sum of Grade II level. Barely half of the Grade V students tested across the country could give correct answers—50 per cent, 54pc and 46pc respectively.

Among the provinces, Sindh stood at the bottom rung of the education ladder, with only 39pc, 22pc and 27pc clearing the test. This should give us enough cause for worry. Also disturbing is the steady decline that has been visible in Sindh. Ten years ago, in ASER 2014, Sindh's children fared much better at 41pc, 23.6pc and 30.5pc.

What needs to be done then? At the launch of the Sindh report in Karachi last week, panellists put forward

many suggestions that have been made by others as well over the decades. They seemed to be like old wine in new bottles. It would have been instructive to hear the Sindh minister of education on the subject. Unfortunately, he could not attend. Hence we had to be content with the same analyses and remedies that we have been hearing for ages.

Planning is poor. Teachers' attendance and performance are not effectively monitored. The education budget is insufficient and most of it is consumed by the salaries of the staff. Teachers need training and their numbers need to be increased to make education accessible to all children.

Another observation made at the launch event was that political will was needed to reform education in Sindh. Absolutely! That is the real challenge given the fact that exploitative landowners have actually resisted the opening of schools in areas under their jurisdiction. They fear that education would make people aware of their rights and that they would then become more difficult to exploit. The failure of the government to open schools has given a boost to the private sector.

Hence the commercialisation of education in a big way.

Can one be optimistic that ASER 2023 is a watershed mark? We will have to wait and see. But we must thank ASER's team and its driving force, Baela Raza Jamil, for serving as the conscience of the nation and producing this report year after year, when others are making hay when the sun shines. -- Courtesy Dawn

This neglect of details has produced bizarre results. Here is a system comprising 40,382 schools for the entire province. But 89pc of them are primary institutions enrolling children from kindergarten to Grade V. This makes a high dropout inevitable. All students who manage to complete Grade V are not ensured further education as there are only a handful of secondary institutions, which cannot accommodate all of them.

What is worse is that nearly two-thirds of primary schools are staffed by only one or two teachers each. There is no education going on in them even if the teacher is present. Then there are thousands of shelterless schools and teachers who have no schools to report to. This is what the Sindh school census 2022-23 tells us. I have visited numerous such schools over the years. For decades, this paper has been writing about this comedy of errors. The government's own advisers — be it the legendary Anita Ghulam Ali or Kaiser Bengali — tried hard to make those

yielding power see reason.

At the ASER launch, one suggestion put forward was that district education authorities be set up to decentralise the system. On paper this sounds good, but without accountability, it would lead to more corruption. Already the district education officer exercises unparalleled powers in the area of his jurisdiction.

One of them is known to be running his own school and using English as the medium of instruction. There are others running tuition centres. Doesn't this amount to a conflict of interest? Will the district authorities be able to check corruption, which is the real name of the malaise that pervades the education sector?

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Hence the commercialisation of education in a big way. Can one be optimistic that ASER 2023 is a watershed mark? We will have to wait and see. But we must thank ASER's team and its driving force, Baela Raza Jamil, for serving as the conscience of the nation and producing this report year after year, when others are making hay when the sun shines. -- Courtesy Dawn

Role of family

Amin Valliani

Upon birth, we open our eyes and receive our initial nourishment from our family. As time goes by, we grow up in a family and get influenced by its environment. It provides us identity, support and security coupled with love and guidance.

A family is the basic unit of society. It consists of members bound together by bonds of blood. They live under one roof and eat from a single kitchen. Adult members assume the responsibility of caring for the children. They also help young members cope with the challenges of advanced age.

For centuries, the family system has been deeply ingrained in our culture and it is often celebrated as a source of strength. The family has a crucial role in nation-building, therefore, it invests all its resources such as time, money and efforts in the development of children who are going to be responsible citizens of the country. They receive the initial training of patriotism, habit-formation, character-building, etc. from the family. It is within the family that one learns about norms, values and behaviour that are taught by religion and accepted in society. For smooth and harmonious living, these norms and values are essential. Their violation creates an imbalanced situation but in an orderly society, these values are rigorously imparted, followed and observed.

Modernisation has brought many challenges for families. People live in a fast and constantly changing world, where they move from one area to another quite frequently, meet different people of different backgrounds and sometimes inadvertently ignore family values. The lack of adherence to

these values causes discord and dysfunction. Besides, the advent of the internet and widespread social media platforms also present major challenges to family values. We see a sustained slide in the observance of these values and in some areas, these have been badly dented. There is a gulf between family members, fighting over trivial issues. Above all, everyone has become egocentric.

The Holy Quran warns believers to safeguard their families from hellfire. It says: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded" (66:6).

All major religions have given us principles that remain profoundly applicable in modern times to live an enlightened family life. These principles include mutual love among family members, sacrifice for each other, peace through compromise and ethical behaviour in dealing with day-to-day affairs, intellectual and aesthetic pursuits and moderating destructive emotions and appetites.

The life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) gives us fundamental principles that make our family strong and happy. He was the head of state in Madinah yet he never ignored his family. He used to share his time with his loved ones including his wives, grandsons and other relatives. In the initial period of his Makkah life, where the infidels used to persecute him and his life was under constant danger, his wife Bibi Khadijah and daughter Bibi Fatima were always there to provide him succour.

Enforcing certain values in family life is the need of hour. We must accept that the new generation is our most precious treasure and if we want to see them as strong pillars of future society then we should invest in them by inculcating positive values in our children. But what are such core values that need to be inculcated?

There is a long list of values that a family needs to instil in its children, but the major values include respect for every member of the family, especially the parents and seniors. The Holy Quran at many places asks believers to show respect and dignity to their parents. The children must realise how parents struggle for their development. If these values are meticulously practised, and the members have mutual respect and consult each other before taking important decisions, the family becomes strong, stable and prosperous.

Besides, it is but natural that every family has to face difficulties and combating them requires stamina. The family should teach its members how to cope with difficult situations and determine right from wrong in complex situations. The recent economic meltdown and skyrocketing prices of necessities has negatively impacted many families. Many families have lost their unity because of high inflation. The cases of frequent altercations and infighting among family members are reported daily. But in such a situation, the family unit should instil the good values of patience, hope and constant struggle in their members to help them cope, and become responsible citizens. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

American Business Council proposes steps for documenting economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The American Business Council (ABC) of Pakistan has proposed documenting the country's economy by emphasizing tax reforms and ease of doing business in the upcoming budget 2024-25.

Tax income should be on profit and not on turnover and with this it has been suggested to restore the confidence of investors and broaden the tax net, Aisha Sarwari, Board of Director of the American Business Council of Pakistan said this while addressing the "Pre-Budget Proposal Seminar" organized by the Ministry of Commerce in Islamabad.

Addressing the seminar, Aisha Sarwari said that ABC members excel in,

and contribute to, all sectors of the economy, with a cumulative gross revenue exceeding US\$ 600 billion. She said that they employ over 130,000 people directly and more than a million indirectly in Pakistan.

The American Business Council recognizes the commercial impact and economic relevance of its members, and proactively works to facilitate and promote their interests in all matters of trade and investment, she said.

She said the organization is therefore revered as an effective channel for dialogue with the Government of Pakistan.

Sarwari Regular

suggestions and input for improvement are provided to the relevant bodies - ministries, regulatory and tax authorities - to ensure that ABC's suggestions and concerns are incorporated in the annual Federal Budget and Trade Policy.

Board of Directorate of ABC said that illicit trade and smuggling is a huge issue that creates a non level playing field in Pakistan for legitimate businesses.

There are a number of innovative products that are today being smuggled into Pakistan due to high tariffs and this also creates a barrier for legal businesses to legally import and commercialise these products in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Women busy in shopping for upcoming Eid ul Fitr Festival at a local market, in Federal Capital.

Jam Kamal visits 'SLIC Cutting-Edge Data Management Center'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, on Friday undertook a significant visit to the State Life Insurance Company (SLIC), located within the prominent State Life Tower in Islamabad and briefed on the health insurance card.

During his visit, Minister Jam Kamal Khan was given a

detailed overview of SLIC's operations and functionalities, said a press release issued here.

Impressed by SLIC's dedication to advancing healthcare initiatives nationwide, Minister Jam Kamal Khan particularly emphasized the pivotal role of the Data Management Center in achieving this objective.

Inflation remains Filipinos' biggest worry: survey

MANILA (Xinhua/APP): Higher prices of goods and services remain Filipinos' top urgent concern, according to a nationwide survey by an independent polling firm released Friday.

In a survey of 1,200 adult Filipinos conducted from March 6 to 10, the pollster Pulse Asia said that 70 per cent of them considered controlling inflation as their most urgent concern.

"The need to control the spiraling prices of basic commodities is the only national concern (out of the 17 included in the survey) considered urgent by most adults in the country as well as across geographic areas and socio-economic classes," the survey showed.

Year-on-year inflation in the Philippines rose to 3.7 per cent in March due to higher food prices, including rice and meat, the Philippine Statistics Authority said on Friday.



Federal Minister for Communications, Mr. Abdul Aleem Khan, on assuming charge of Ministry, is being briefed on functioning of Ministry of Communications and its attached departments by Federal Secretary communications Mr. Ali Sher Mehsood in Islamabad.

Bilal Yasin says: Continuous efforts vital to ensure price control

INDEPENDENT REPORT LAHORE: Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin has said that prices of essential items remained low in the holy month of Ramazan. He said this while presiding over a meeting of the supervisory ministry committee of Ramazan Relief Package at Civil Secretariat on Friday.

He said that prices of onion, tomato and potato had been reduced by improving their supply, adding that the government had made sincere efforts to provide relief to the people.

He further said that price control was a

continuous effort and teams should remain active in the field in this regard. Bilal Yasin said that a plan had been prepared to control inflation during last few days of the holy month of Ramazan and prior to Eid-ul-Fitr, adding that special focus was also being given to supply of essential items. He directed the administration to ensure proper monitoring of prices and supply of chicken, onion, potato, tomato and other essential items.

The meeting was informed that fair price shops would remain operational until 27th of Ramazan.

Banks must prioritise its lending to SME sector to support PM's vision of sustainable economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) on Friday proposed that at least 25 per cent of concessional financing, including the Export Finance Scheme, exclusively to SMEs in the export sector may be allocated in the coming budget.

This strategic allocation will not only support small sector development but also promote a more inclusive and sustainable economy. PBF President Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman in a meeting with members of Pakistan

Cotton Ginners Association, proposed that the State Bank of Pakistan may review its credit policies by fixing a special quota to finance the small and medium enterprises, as only the large industries have been availing government's all major concessional export loaning facilities, with very limited financing is left for the SMEs which are the backbone of the economy, contributing around 40 per cent to the national gross domestic product (GDP).

He observed that despite their significance, more than 5 million SMEs

face a significant credit gap, receiving only 7% of private sector credit, far below neighboring countries like Bangladesh (25%) and India (18%). To achieve near to our neighbour countries targets we must advocate for targeted and fixed SME allocations in concessional financing schemes, particularly those aimed at the export-oriented sector.

Khawaja Mehboob said the SBP has launched various policies for the promotion of SME finance, but the required results were still awaited.

Eid shoppers prioritize children's joy over personal comforts

MULTAN (APP): As the joyous occasion of Eid approaches, the bazaars that once brimmed with festive fervor now present a deserted look especially during day time due to tight grip of inflation, however, some families could be witnessed after sun set.

Amidst the vibrant displays of colorful fabrics, shimmering jewelry, and shining shoes, middle class citizens with diminishing purchasing power are found engaged in minor level shopping at some popular bazaars and markets including Gardezi, Gulshan, Hussain Agahi and Cantt markets but a reasonable number returned

without shopping.

Similarly, many customers were being observed purchasing clothes, shoes, toys and jewellery for their kids while sacrificing their own requirements, said Sunny, a shopkeeper in Gardezi Market. He, however, remarked that over 90 per cent of customers were voicing concerns about inflation. He added that the customers from rural areas were noted absent compared to previous year's visit to the bazaars.

In a clear reflection of the prevailing economic woes, Mr Arshid Sasi, a cloth merchant, also shared his perspective on the

inflationary scenario. Arshid, with a furrowed brow lamented and stated, "Inflation has caused a severe blow to the business." The prices of fabrics have skyrocketed, making it increasingly challenging for customers to afford even the most basic attire for Eid festivities. He however stated that parents preferred to purchase clothes for their kids. He estimated that over 30 per cent decrease in the number of customers at his shop.

Suhaib Khan, an owner of a shoe shop, also hinted that the situation was equally dire for shoe

retailers. "With the cost of raw materials soaring, we are compelled to pass on the burden to customers, further dampening their spirits. The volume of sales has plummeted and it reflected the grim reality of shrinking incomes", he stated.

Saqib Noori, a shopkeeper in Town Wajhanwala of district Khanewal, also highlighted a concerning trend which is a remarkable decrease in the number of customers visiting his shop, amounting to nearly 40 per cent, compared to previous years.

He observed that customer response was

better during the marriage season before Ramadan. He remarked that a substantial portion of his clientele hailed from rural areas with an agricultural background. He however expressed optimism and pointed out that April was the month of wheat crop harvesting, and it was a crucial time for rural communities heavily reliant on agricultural yields. Anticipating an influx of customers following the emergence of crops in markets, he pinned high hopes about a potential surge in sales at his shop.

About Eid Shopping trends, Noori also revealed a dilemma that customers.

CM decides to establish three directorates in Excise Dept

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has decided to establish three separate directorates in the Excise Department with the purpose to enhance its working capacity in line with contemporary needs and requirements.

These directorates will include the Directorate of Vehicle Registration & Management, the Directorate of Intelligence and Narcotics Control, and the Directorate of Property Tax. The chief minister has directed the quarters concerned to clearly demarcate the roles and responsibilities of the proposed directorates.

He added that the ultimate goal is to put this important department on modern lines, and all possible steps would be taken in this regard. He was presiding over a meeting of the Excise and Taxation department, held here at Chief Minister's House.

The chief minister has directed the concerned authorities to propose necessary amendments in the relevant legal framework for enhancing the revenue collection of the department.

He also decided to withdraw the Excise department's vehicles under the use of unauthorized persons and directed the authorities

concerned to formally serve the notice to all unauthorized persons in this regard, adding that legal action would be taken against those who do not return the vehicles within the stipulated time frame.

All such vehicles would be handed over to the police and other provincial departments on a need basis.

He further directed that the defective and useless vehicles, currently parked at the warehouse of the Excise department, should also be auctioned in a transparent manner, and made it clear that these vehicles should not be handed over to anyone on political recommendation.



LAHORE: A large number of people participating in Al-Quds rally to express solidarity with the people of Palestine at Mall Road.

Punjab Governor says: Promotion of hotel industry can provide employment opportunities to people

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman today presented a certificate of appreciation to Irshad B. Anjum, Chief Executive Officer of a private hotel, for his meritorious services in the hospitality industry at Governor House Lahore.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the promotion of hotel industry can provide employment opportunities to many people. He said that Chief Executive Officer Irshad B. Anjum's services to the hospitality industry are commendable. He said that Irshad B. Anjum has worked day and night for the development of his organization and spared no effort to take it to the new heights. Governor Punjab expressed the hope that he would use his skills for the development and further improvement of the hospitality industry in the future. Chief Executive Officer Irshad B. Anjum said that today the Governor of Punjab awarded him with a certificate for his meritorious services in the hospitality industry which is a matter of pride for him.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman presenting a certificate of appreciation to Irshad B. Anjum, Chief Executive Officer of a private hotel, for his meritorious services in the hospitality industry at Governor House.

Dr. Saqib emphasizes crucial role of BISP employees in program's success

Independent Report
BAHAWALPUR (APP): Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib has emphasized the pivotal role of BISP employees in the program's success. Addressing BISP employees at Masjid Ibrahim, Kanal Colony Zonal Office Irrigation in Bahawalpur, Dr. Amjad Saqib highlighted that BISP's success in disbursing 471 billion rupees to deserving sisters, daughters, and mothers across the country is owed to the dedication and hard work of the employees.

Highlighting the importance of transparency, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib directed the employees to ensure that assistance amounts are disbursed with utmost honesty and integrity, particularly emphasizing the need for transparency in payments to innocent women.

11 dead, 1375 injured in 1261 RTCs in Punjab

Independent Report
LAHORE: About eleven persons were killed and 1375 injured in 1261 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of these, 638 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 737 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of Hospitals.

Furthermore, the analysis showed those 728 drivers, 55 underage drivers, 184 pedestrians, and 474 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes.

Clinics on Wheels program under new mechanism to be relaunched in Punjab

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Khawaja Imran Nazir has announced the relaunch of the Clinics on Wheels program, scheduled for the end of April. The initiative will see a new mechanism aimed at bolstering healthcare services across Punjab. During a review meeting of the National Health Support Program (NHSP), the minister revealed that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif will inaugurate the program, emphasizing the government's commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure.

Highlighting the comprehensive approach, he outlined plans to revamp 2500 rural health centers and 300 basic health units by March 2028. This overhaul aims to modernize medical facilities at the grassroots level, aligning with the vision set forth by the Chief Minister.

Moreover, the minister underscored the importance of capacity building for healthcare professionals.

Man found dead hanging with tree

Independent Report
FAISALABAD (APP): The body of an unknown person was found hanging from a tree in the limits of Muridwala police station, here on Friday. A police report said that a man was found hanging from a tree in Chak-480. After being informed by area people, the police removed it to the mortuary for a autopsy. The identification of the deceased is yet to be established.

Workers welfare Board to be made responsible organization

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): The Workers Welfare Board will be formed very soon and responsible persons will be appointed as members of the board, said the Provincial Labor Minister Fazal Shakoor Khan here on Friday.

Board members who are interested in solving workers' problems and are serious about their welfare would be encouraged, Fazal Shakoor Khan said while presiding over a meeting of the Workers Welfare Board. In the meeting, the provincial minister stressed on the promotion of quality education in the educational institutions managed by the Workers Welfare Board. There was a detailed discussion about various welfare board issues including scholarships for school children and other facilities given to them, the Provincial Minister said.



PESHAWAR: Participants are holding demonstration against USA and Israel as they are marking Youm-ul-Quds to show solidarity with people of Palestine, organized by National Ulama and Mashaikh Council outside Sunehri Mosque.

KP to be the first province to approve drug policy: Qasim

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah announced on Friday that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be the first province to approve a drug policy. He made this statement during a meeting of the Health Department.

The minister emphasized the importance of pharmacist appointments in hospitals and highlighted that under the policy, pharmacy services would be integrated with health centers. He further stated that doctors would prescribe medications based on formulas rather than brands for patients, aiming to eliminate price manipulation and supply constraints from the drug market.

The implementation of the policy is expected to reduce medication expenses for patients. Hospital pharmacist appointments under the policy will ensure the availability of standard medications at lower rates for the public.

Success of Aun Ch LHC seeks reply from respondents on petition filed

Independent Report
LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has sought reply from respondents on petition filed by Suleman Akram Raja against the success of Aun Chaudhry from NA-128.

Justice Baqar Ali Najafi took up for hearing petition filed by Suleman Akram Raja against Election Commission (EC) decision regarding success of Aun Chaudhry from NA-128.

The counsel for petitioner told the court EC gave decision for resorting to tribunal on our petition.

The court remarked why you did not resort to tribunal as per EC decision.

The counsel for the petitioner said as per law the jurisdiction of our petition is high court. It is requested to court to nullify EC decision.

The court while issuing notices to the respondents sought reply and adjourned the hearing of the case till May 2.

International News

EU leaders, Blinken pledge continued support for Armenia amid regional tensions

Monitoring Desk
BRUSSELS: The United States and European Union will continue to support Armenia and ethnic Armenians from the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, leaders from both sides of the Atlantic pledged as they were meeting with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday.

Azerbaijan took control of the former breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, prompting a mass exodus of its ethnic Armenian population.

"We're committed to further growing our support to Armenia's democratic and economic resilience," said U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, adding Washington was backing the country's efforts for more food security, digital infrastructure and diversification of its energy sector. "And we will continue to support the 100,000 ethnic Armenians displaced from the Nagorno-Karabakh region. This is central to Armenia's long-term stability", Blinken added.

Armenia is a treaty ally of Russia and traditionally Moscow's closest partner in the South Caucasus, but the two sides' relations have sharply deteriorated in recent months.

Yerevan has sought to build ties with the West, blaming Russia for failing to defend it from Azerbaijan, its neighbour and longtime rival, as well as distancing itself from Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Russia, Azerbaijan and Baku's close ally Turkey had criticised the Brussels meet-



Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei looks at the coffins of members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who were killed in the Israeli airstrike on the Iranian embassy complex in the Syrian capital Damascus, during a funeral ceremony in Tehran, Iran.

US-Chinese military talks resume on safety in the air and at sea after a nearly 2-year break

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: For the first time in nearly two years, U.S. and Chinese defense officials met this week to discuss unsafe and aggressive ship and aircraft incidents between the two militaries in the Pacific region, restarting a dialogue that Beijing abruptly ended in a dispute involving Taiwan.

The meeting, which was Tuesday through Thursday in Hawaii, came as Washington and Beijing work to expand communications between the two world powers and ease escalating tensions. Military-to-military contact had stalled in August 2022, when Beijing suspended all such communication after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, the self-governing island China claims as its own.

The thaw in relations between the two countries got a kick-start last November when U.S. President Joe Biden and China's President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco. About a month later, Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with his Chinese counterpart in a video call — in the first senior military-to-military contact since the Pelosi visit.

Other top-level talks have continued, including a call earlier this week between Biden and Xi, and a visit to China by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen that began on Thursday. The resurgence of senior military leader discussions includes the relaunch of routine engagements, including the China-U.S. Military Maritime Consultative Agreement meeting.

Six months into Gaza war, Israel faces deepening isolation

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Six months into the war in Gaza, the killing of a group of aid workers by an Israeli air strike summed up both the dire humanitarian crisis and the lack of a clear way out of a conflict that is leaving Israel increasingly isolated.

The attack on Monday night that killed seven staff of the World Central Kitchen (WCK) aid group, including six foreigners, has angered even some of Israel's closest allies, adding to growing pressure for an end to the fighting. Israel's military has acknowledged the strike was conducted mistakenly by its forces and apologized for the "unintentional" deaths of the seven, who included citizens of Britain, Australia and Poland, a dual US-Canadian citizen and a Palestinian colleague.

But that has done little to ease growing alarm abroad, where public opinion even in traditionally friendly countries like Brit-

Trump loses bid to delay hush money proceedings

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: A New York judge has denied Donald Trump's bid to delay his April 15 trial on charges stemming from hush money paid to a porn star until the US Supreme Court reviews claim to presidential immunity in a separate criminal case.

The court is scheduled to hear the former US president's arguments that he is immune from federal prosecution for trying to overturn his 2020 election defeat to Democratic President Joe Biden on April 25.

His defence lawyers in the New York case in March asked Justice Juan Merchan to delay the trial until that review was complete, arguing it was relevant because prosecutors were seeking to present evidence of statements Trump made while he was president from 2017 to 2021.

In a court ruling on Wednesday, Merchan said Trump had waited too long to raise the issue.

US threatens policy shift if Israeli excesses continue

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The United States on Thursday issued its strongest public rebuke toward Israel since it launched an invasion of Gaza, seeking for the first time to leverage US aid to influence Israeli military behavior.

President Joe Biden, a staunch supporter of the Israeli offensive until now, called for an immediate ceasefire in a call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, conditioning support for its offensive on concrete steps to address the safety of aid workers and Palestinian civilians.

The rebuke followed an attack on a World Central Kitchen charity convoy this week that killed seven food aid workers.

The White House had described Biden as outraged and heartbroken by the attack but, prior to Thursday's call, the president had made no fundamental change in Washington's steadfast support for Israel in its conflict against Palestinian Hamas militants.

Japan seeks to work with South Korea

Monitoring Desk
TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Friday said he wanted to cooperate with South Korea and the Philippines, allies shared with the US, and even engage with North Korea to promote regional security.

"The current security environment is tough and complex, and we are at a turning point in history," Kishida said in a group interview.

"Cooperation between Japan and the United States and like-minded countries is a very important issue," he added.

Israel wrecking Gaza healthcare, says MSF

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: Israel is systematically destroying Gaza's healthcare system, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said on Thursday, describing scenes of carnage that no hospitals in the world would be able to handle.

The medical charity said children were turning up in hospitals with gunshot wounds from drones, while many patients were being crushed under rubble then suffering severe burns.

The MSF said deadly attacks on humanitarian staff showed either deliber-

Turkey arrests two more suspected spies for Israel

Monitoring Desk
ANKARA: Turkish authorities, who have denounced Israel for its war against Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip, have arrested two people suspected of spying for Israeli intelligence, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on Friday.

Since January, Turkish authorities have detained or arrested and charged dozens of people suspected of having ties to Israel's Mossad intelligence agency.

Strike on Iran's consulate in Syria is 'turning point', Hezbollah head says

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: The head of Lebanon's armed group Hezbollah said on Friday that Israel's strike on Damascus this week marked a "turning point" since Oct 7, when Palestinian group Hamas launched an attack on Israel that has led to escalating regional tensions.

The Damascus strike on Monday killed seven Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps members, among them a senior Quds Force commander, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi. Iran has vowed revenge.

Iran-backed Hezbollah has said it supports Iran's right to "punish" Israel, and in televised remarks on Friday, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said the response was coming.

"Be certain, be sure, that the Iranian response to the targeting of the consulate in Damascus is definitely coming against Israel," he said.

Israel has braced itself for the possibility of a retaliatory attack, cancelling leave for all combat units and mobilising more troops for air defence units.

Speaking to Israeli forces at an air base on Friday, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel was attacking enemies wherever it decided to do so.

"It could be in Damascus and it could be in Beirut," he said. "The enemy is badly hit in all places and is therefore looking for ways to respond. We are ready with a multi-layered defence."

Until now, Iran has avoided directly entering the fray, while supporting a slew of attacks on Israeli and US targets by its allies across the region in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq.

Govt to establish Danish schools in Islamabad, other areas of country: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said the government will establish new Danish schools in remote areas of Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and other areas of the country including Islamabad where the children will get state of the art free education, boarding, and food facilities.

He was talking to the participants of the Iftar-dinner hosted by him in honour of orphaned children and children with special abilities at the Prime Minister House on Thursday.

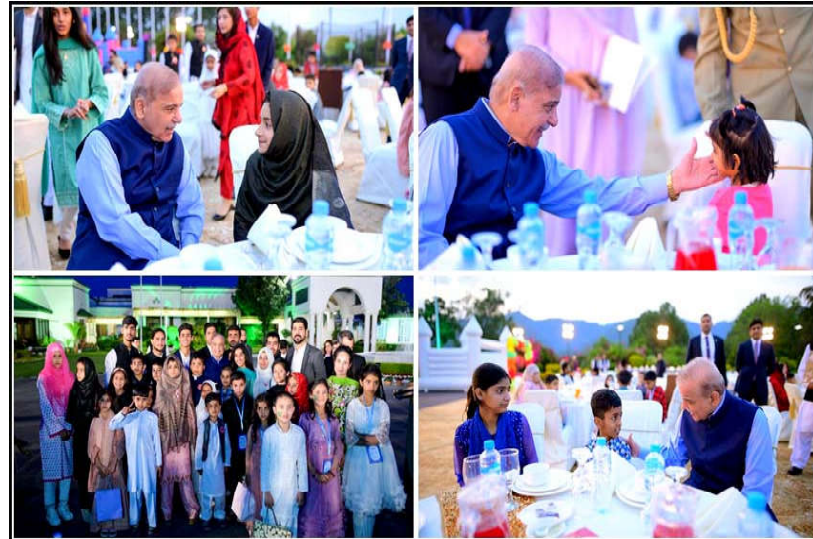
Besides he also announced to establish state of the art hospitals in Islamabad, AJK and GB.

The prime minister, on the occasion, taking keen interest in the children, interacted with them and inquired about their well-being. "I am happy to meet the cute children came from various institutions including SOS and Hassan Academy," he said adding today the children were the chief

guests while he was their host.

During his interaction with the children, the prime minister said he found them very intelligent who will join different professions in future and will play key role in the country's development and prosperity.

He said no doubt, the parents were the biggest blessings, but the Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH was also born with no father and his mother passed away when he was only six years old.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets orphans and differently abled children at an Iftar organized for them.

KP cabinet approves provision of Rs. 859.8 m supplementary grant for TMAs

PESHAWAR (APP): The meeting of provincial cabinet chaired by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur here Friday approved provision of Rs 859.8 million supplementary grant for Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMAs) in the settled and merged districts to meet out salaries, pensions and previous liabilities.

The cabinet also approved upcoming administrative expenses for which formal concurrence would be given in the upcoming assembly session. The cabinet held detailed deliberations on provision of grant for Cadet College Spinkai in South Waziristan Tribal District, supplementary grant for TMAs and approval of signing financial agreement between KP Government and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Unit.

The cabinet approved the provision of special financial grant for Cadet College Spinkai in South Waziristan Tribal District to cater for operational expenses of the College. The college is currently providing quality education to students in South Waziristan where fees have been kept at a bare minimum keeping in view the low economic activity in the area and to provide quality education to maximum number of students.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan meeting with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, to offer his condolences over the recent accident of Chinese engineers.

NDMA launches Disaster Management Coordination Forum

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has established a national level forum titled 'Disaster Management Coordination Forum' (DMCF) to bolster provincial coordination. The forum is designed to provide strategic guidance and to oversee, coordinate and monitor disaster management activities and interventions at both national and provincial levels, a news release said.

The inaugural meeting of the DMCF was convened at NDMA Headquarters, presided by Chairman NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik.

The meeting was attended by all Members, including NDMA senior management, as well as the Director Generals of Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) and State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA).

The DMCF is set to meet quarterly to deliberate on matters outlined in the Terms of Reference (TORs). Additionally, NDMA's Disaster Risk Reduction Wing will provide secretariat support for the DMCF.

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CPO/DIG Operations says: Citizens should cooperate with police to ensure peace and tranquility

ISLAMABAD (APP): DIG Operations Syed Shehbaz Nadeem Bukhari has issued an important message to the citizens of Islamabad, stating that the foremost priority of Islamabad Capital Police is the protection of the lives, property, and dignity of the citizens.

"Frequent training and awareness programs can be arranged to make women aware of their rights and equip them for exercising just demands," she said.

She said women can build their self-confidence, and increase their economic power by learning new skills adding that women's empowerment is important for the progress of a country or a nation.

"VC AIOU says: Success lies in the teachings of Quran"

unrelated to any crime, you can message me at this number 0330-0260022.

He further said that, it is also essential to note that if citizens officers stop you anywhere, cooperate with them. The police are here for your own safety. The most important thing is that senior police officers are present to listen to all your complaints. So, I believe there's no need to engage in conflicts. The police personnel standing on the roads are there for the protection of your life.

SP Plan & Patrolling orders Dolphin Squad officials to perform their duty efficiently

ISLAMABAD (APP): Following the special directions of CPO/ DIG Operations

police officers and officials in the prevention and control of crimes, emphasizing their role in ensuring the safety of lives and property of the citizens.



Syed Shehbaz Nadeem Bukhari, the SP Plan and Patrolling officer, addressed a briefing to the Dolphin Squad officers and officials, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the SP Plan and Patrolling Hakim Khan emphasized the need to make patrols more effective in combating crimes in Islamabad, particularly by positioning themselves strategically in areas with higher crime rates.

Encouragement was extended for arrests of criminals, and a strict zero-tolerance policy against corruption within the police force was underscored.

Furthermore, the SP Plan and Patrolling reiterated the importance of all

police officers and officials in the prevention and control of crimes, emphasizing their role in ensuring the safety of lives and property of the citizens.

The formation of the Dolphin Squad aims to instill confidence in citizens regarding their safety, not tarnish the department's reputation. It's essential for officers to exhibit good conduct and adhere to clear policies aimed at crime control, he added.

Officers were reminded of their duty to respond promptly to reports of crimes and to conduct searches for suspicious individuals or vehicles without license plates.

He further said that, protecting the lives and property of citizens remains the top priority of Islamabad Capital Police.

Infrastructure development projects pose serious threat to Snow leopards, prey species in GB: WWF study

ISLAMABAD (APP): "Rapid infrastructure development, primarily roads, potentially degrades the Snow leopard (Panthera uncia) habitat resulting in disrupting the big cats' movement and increasing human-wildlife conflict in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. The prey species of the Snow leopard such as Himalayan ibex and domestic livestock are also killed due to heavy traffic on the highways".

The project was supported by the "With Snow Leopards Small Grant" (SLSG) initiated by Tencent Foundation and Shan Shui Conservation Center with support from Huatai Foundation, Amity Foundation, and Pecking University Center for Nature and Society.

The study recommended that there is need to strike a balance between boosting infrastructure development with conservation of threatened wildlife such as Snow leopards in the region. The report stated that the Gilgit Baltistan (GB) region is home to diverse wildlife including vulnerable Snow leopards. It pointed out that the linear infrastructure development, which cuts

through the landscape such as roads, has fragmented the Snow leopard habitat. The report found that although linear infrastructure improves national and regional economies, it restricts wildlife movement and poses threat to the Snow leopards and their prey species such as ungulates.

Focusing on the broader road ecology theme, the study gathered evidence on infrastructure-related threats to Snow leopards and their habitat in the GB region. It collected data on wildlife-vehicle collisions, investigated the impact of increasing infrastructure on human-wildlife interaction and analysed land use changes in known Snow leopard hotspots over the past twenty years.

This has been revealed in WWF-Pakistan's baseline research study undertaken through the project titled "Building Ecological and Sustainable Transport and Linear Infrastructure for Snow Leopards in the Hindu Kush Karakoram Himalaya Landscape in Pakistan (BEAST)".

The project was supported by the "With Snow Leopards Small Grant" (SLSG) initiated by Tencent Foundation and Shan Shui Conservation Center with support from Huatai Foundation, Amity Foundation, and Pecking University Center for Nature and Society.

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Minister joins NPC, gala festival

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan on Friday joined the National Press Club Gala Festival, where he engaged with journalists and their families, distributing gifts in a gesture of appreciation for their contributions. Welcomed by National Press Club president, Azhar Jatoi, Secretary Nayyar Ali, and other senior journalists, the minister highlighted the importance of press clubs in fostering a conducive environment for journalistic endeavors, said a Press release issued here.

In addition to the federal minister, several parliamentarians graced the occasion, underscoring the significance of the press in the democratic process. Minister Jam Kamal Khan commended the efforts of the press club and praised the amiable atmosphere cultivated by its members.

Expressing his commitment to supporting journalists, the minister affirmed that his office would always be accessible to them, ensuring facilitation at all levels.

This pledge signifies the government's recognition of the vital role played by journalists in informing the public and upholding democratic principles.

Private sector urged to create job opportunities for women

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director Lok Virsa Dr Fouzia Saeed on Friday urged private sector and civil society organizations to strengthen business sustainability and women's empowerment to ensure their active participation by creating job opportunities for women.

Fouzia said that adequate implementations of laws are crucial to providing a secure environment for women to prosper themselves. "As a way of strengthening confidence, personal and professional skill building can provide opportunities to women, she added.

She said women can build their self-confidence, and increase their economic power by learning new skills adding that women's empowerment is important for the progress of a country or a nation.

"Frequent training and awareness programs can be arranged to make women aware of their rights and equip them for exercising just demands," she said.

VC AIOU says: Success lies in the teachings of Quran"

VC AIOU says: Success lies in the teachings of Quran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor, of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood on Friday said that the success lies in truly following the teachings of the Holy Quran.

While addressing the Khatam al-Qur'an ceremony on the 25th night of Ramadan at the University's Colony Mosque, he said that all the good things and achievements of this world and the hereafter have been mentioned by Allah in the Quran. The Quran is not just a book to be read and understood, but it is necessary to live our lives according to its teachings.

Dr. Nasir announced the construction of a separate hall for women on the upper floor of the mosque at the request of the mosque administration.

The event began with Naat Khawani, with Muhammad Abu Bakr Jamsheed, Muhammad Hasan, and Rayan Wazir reciting Naats.



KARACHI: Mr. Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting in a meeting with a delegation of CPNE.

CM Maryam Nawaz chairs meeting Punjab Apex Committee approves VVIP security for Chinese nationals

LAHORE: Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, on Friday chaired the first meeting of Provincial Apex Committee to work out an effective strategy for the protection of Chinese nationals working on CPEC and other development projects in Punjab, and for an effective check on cross-border smuggling.

The meeting strongly condemned the death of Chinese nationals in the Besham incident. Madam Chief Minister said, "We must utilize all resources at our disposal to ensure fool-proof security for Chinese experts working on CPEC and other development projects in Punjab." She highlighted, "We are all on the same page to face the challenge of terrorism, which has become a very

complex warfare now." Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated the role of the Pakistan Army and other security agencies in eliminating terrorism from the country. She said, "I salute everyone who is striving to protect the country and its people." She added, "The sacrifices of all martyrs and their families in this regard will always be remembered."

Madam Chief Minister emphasized, "The world recognized the usefulness of the National Action Plan formulated after the APS tragedy. However, it needs to be upgraded and made more effective by removing the existing loopholes."

She emphasized the need to further upgrade the security apparatus with the use of the latest technology, AI tools, best training,

modern weaponry, and intelligence gathering techniques.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "Terrorism has different manifestations. Ending religious extremism and terrorism is a bigger challenge." She added, "Political fascism has also taken the form of terrorism." She pointed out how the whole world saw the results of political terrorism on May 9. A so-called political party did what TTP could not do, she added. Madam Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "As a politician, despite going through bad situations and difficulties, she never even thought of an incident like May 9."

The Chief Minister said, "When it comes to Pakistan, everything else fades into the background."

Second phase of Hajj training to start from April 15

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second phase of Hajj training will commence from April 15 and it will be conducted by 40 resource persons and religious scholars of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony at 122 locations across the country.

Chief Master Trainer Ahmed Nadeem Khan said this while addressing the concluding session of training of Hajj Master Trainers of the ministry on Friday. He further said the Hajj Curriculum Committee consisting of experienced officers of the ministry has finalized the Hajj training curriculum after many days of hard work. He said the committee has finalized the training schedule and locations for the second phase of Hajj training after long consultations with the respective Hajj camps.



ANKARA: Turkish Minister for National Defence H.E. Yasar Guler, Turkish Minister for Trade H.E. Prof. Dr Omer Bolat, Ambassador H.E Dr. Yousaf Junaid during Pakistan Day reception.

IFA inspects 1291 food outlets, issues fines worth Rs 2.8m

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr Tahira Saddique on Friday sharing a monthly report of the authority said that the authority inspected 1291 food outlets and imposed fines of Rs 2.8 million on errant shopkeepers found flouting regulations.

Talking to APP, she said that with an unwavering commitment to quality assurance, the authority's latest report underscored its relentless pursuit of adherence to food safety standards across the Federal Capital. On the directions of Director Food, Irfan Nawaz Memon, she accompanied by the Food Safety Teams (FSTs) inspected 1,291 establishments and sealed 16 outlets due to substandard food quality and inadequate arrangements, with legal actions initiated against three offenders, she said.

Additionally, She said a staggering total of 664 oral

warnings and 446 written notices were issued, signaling a zero-tolerance approach towards violations. Responding promptly to citizens' concerns, the authority diligently addressed 14 complaints, ensuring accountability and responsiveness in its operations, Dr Tahira said.

She said that during the holy month of Ramazan, the IFA intensified its oversight, conducting thorough inspections at 360 points within Ramazan Bazaars. Furthermore, in a bid to streamline operations and promote compliance, licenses were granted to 43 food establishments, bolstering the regulatory framework. Highlighting its commitment to combating adulteration and excess, Dr Tahira said the IFA disposed of 6,500 kilograms of compromised food items, reaffirming its dedication to upholding stringent quality standards and protecting consumer welfare.

Man deprived of mobile phone by impersonator

ISLAMABAD (APP): A robbery incident was reported in another day at a private hospital where a citizen fell victim to a cunning imposter posing as a doctor, resulting in the theft of an iPhone 13 Pro Max.

According to details, the victim, Saif Muhammad, a resident of Korang Town lodged a complaint at Gulraiz police station, recounting how he was lured by the impersonator through a social media platform with the promise of purchasing a mobile phone.

The fake doctor arranged to meet Saif Muhammad at a private hospital under the guise of conducting the transaction.

IHC imposes fine of Rs 50000 on PCB for not presenting lawyer

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has imposed fine of Rs 50000 on Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for not presenting new counsel during hearing of petition filed against removing president and secretary of Regional Cricket Association (RCA).

The court has issued order if lawyer from the side of PCB is not here on next hearing then chairman PCB will be summoned.

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan issued written order Friday.

IHC wraps up petition seeking removal of senior journalist Sami from ECL

ISLAMABAD (Online): secretary on the petition regarding removing name of Sami Ibrahim from ECL.

The court ordered to present interior secretary till 2.30 pm.

The state counsel told the court DG passport is on the way. He will reach after some time.

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan inquired he will say what after coming here that interior ministry had said to him.

The court remarked we are issuing bailable arrest warrants against surety bond in the sum of Rs 50000.

The court resumed hearing of the petition seeking removal of name of journalist Sami Ibrahim name from ECL.

DG passport appeared before the court.

DG Passport told the court name of Sami Ibrahim was removed from PNIL LIST in compliance with court's order.

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ISLAMABAD: Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik presides over first meeting of Disaster Management Coordination Forum (DMCF) at NDAMHQ.