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Federation, provinces to jointly overcome biggest challenge of economic stability: PM

KARACHI (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the economic stability was a biggest challenge for the country at the moment that could be overcome with the coordinated efforts of the federation and the provinces.

"We should work together to serve the country and for the development of the provinces as with the joint efforts we can solve problems of the people of Pakistan," the PM said in his remarks at meeting with Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and his cabinet here at the CM House.

PM Sharif emphasized that the federation and the provinces could work in collaboration towards the improvement of national economy.

Shehbaz Sharif called upon federal and the provincial governments to keep very close relationship to make our country developed nation. He said development of Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

Balochistan, was in fact the development of Pakistan. Prime Minister hoped that the big investment opportunities will benefit to all provinces equally.

He stressed the need of forging unity and harmony among each other so that positive results could be achieved. He said the purpose of his visit to Sindh was to create mutual understanding.

Referring to foreign investment, the Prime Minister made a special mention of recent visits of the delegation of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the president of Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan and hoped that in coming months, many foreign delegations would visit Pakistan.

As a result of February 8 election, the people of Pakistan gave mandate to Pakistan People's Party in Sindh while in Punjab, they gave opportunity to Pakistan Muslim League (N). However, he said, "in federation there is a split mandate and we have to respect it."



KARACHI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a briefing regarding various developmental projects of the Sindh Government.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency, Luo Zhaohui, along with his delegation call on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Presents Rs1 mln cheque to KPC Media playing the role of fourth pillar of democracy: Tarar

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday said media in the country was playing the role of fourth pillar of democracy.

In a meeting with a delegation of Karachi Press Club here at the Governor House, he said the government supported the freedom of media in the country.

Tarar said incumbent government soon after assuming office took steps to clear outstanding dues of the media houses with the aim to provide much-needed relief to journalists and media workers.

The meeting discussed various matters pertaining to the welfare of journalists and media workers.

Iranian President leaves after 3-day Pakistan visit

KARACHI (APP): President of Islamic Republic of Iran Dr Ebrahim Raisi has left for Tehran along with his delegation after completing three-day visit to Pakistan early on Wednesday morning.

Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori and Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah saw off the distinguished guest at Karachi Airport early morning.

During his three-day visit, the Iranian President held meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Chief of the Army Staff, Chairman Senate, Speaker of the National Assembly, and the chief ministers and governors of Sindh and Punjab.

Six killed by rivals during wedding in Lakki Marwat

PESHAWAR (APP): A wedding ceremony turned into a mayhem in Lakki Marwat, where six individuals were killed and two others injured when a rival party resorted to indiscriminate firing on their opponents attending the celebrations.

Lakki police informed on Wednesday that the incident occurred in village Akri Khanzada Khail, Lakki Marwat where six people fell prey to a longstanding rivalry and were killed by their rivals during a wedding.



Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mr. Attaullah Tarar handing over a cheque to Karachi Press Club at Governor House Karachi.

Pakistan, Iran reaffirm commitment to peaceful Kashmir resolution

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a landmark development aimed at bolstering diplomatic ties between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, President Dr. Seyed Ebrahim Raisi of Iran concluded his official visit to Pakistan on Wednesday.

The visit, spanning from April 22nd to April 24th, was initiated at the invitation of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, marking a significant step towards enhancing cooperation and fostering mutual understanding between the two neighboring nations.

Accompanied by a distinguished delegation comprising the Foreign Minister of Iran, H.E.

Amir Abdollahian, and other esteemed members of the Iranian cabinet and senior officials, President Raisi engaged in delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The discussions encompassed a wide array of topics, including the review of Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations, as well as exchanges of views on regional and global issues of mutual concern.

The visit also witnessed the signing of several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and Agreements, signifying a commitment to deepening cooperation across various sectors. Amidst these discussions, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir is-

sue through dialogue and peaceful means, based on the will of the Kashmiri people and in accordance with international law.

Economic cooperation emerged as a focal point of discussions, with both sides expressing a commitment to expanding trade and economic ties. President Raisi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pledged to elevate the bilateral trade volume to USD 10 billion over the next five years. They outlined joint development-oriented economic projects, including the establishment of joint border markets, economic free zones, and new border openings, aimed at transforming the common border into a corridor of prosperity.

President for stronger economic, cultural ties with China

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday said that Pakistan and China enjoyed long-term strategic relations, which need to be further strengthened in the areas of trade, economy, agriculture, people-to-people contacts, and culture.

The president, in a meeting with the visiting Chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), Luo Zhaohui, who along with his delegation called on him, underlined the need for both countries to continue to work together to take bilateral relations to new heights.

The ambassador of China in Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, the Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Dr Jahanzeb Khan, and senior officials of the Chinese and Pakistani governments attended the meeting.

Reiterating Pakistan's firm commitment to China

Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the president said that Pakistan considered CPEC of immense strategic importance and was fully committed to the timely completion of all CPEC projects.

Highlighting the importance of Gwadar Port, he said that Gwadar Port would not only promote regional connectivity but would also make the transport of goods to China cost-effective.

He also suggested to undertake joint training projects to equip human resources with skills keeping in view the Chinese demand for skilled workforce.

Chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), Mr Luo Zhaohui, briefed the president about CIDCA's role in Pakistan's socio-economic development as well as its contributions in the health and education sectors.

Is any one accountable in agencies: IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has remarked is any one answerable in agencies.

"Is any one answerable in agencies. Where is self-accountability which could be seen. State courts will not protect any terrorist. Question arises when any ultra vires law step is taken. Whatever action is taken by police we see it if it has been taken correct or incorrect, these remarks were given by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani during hearing of the missing persons case here Wednesday.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani remarked " whose near and dear one goes missing, he is relative of common man or judge or lawyer this act foments hatred among them.

The case regarding Baloch missing persons came up for hearing before IHC Wednesday.

Attorney General (AG) Mansoor Awan ap-

peared before the court and presented the report about the missing persons who have been recovered.

The court inquired the violations of human rights were identified in this petition. It is clear the state courts will not protect any terrorist. Question arises when any ultra vires law step is taken. Whatever action is taken by police we see it if it has been taken correct or otherwise.

The counsel Emman Mazari told the court the day the caretaker Prime Minister (PM) had appeared in this court, one Baloch student was lifted on that day. On next day this missing student is released from Rawalpindi.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani remarked policemen are suspended easily because whatever they do they do it before all. Is any one accountable in agencies. Where is self-accountability. Where is self-account-

ability which can be seen. MY opinion against enforced disappearances commission is only for the reason because they are working along side those who are alleged. The institutions which are under law are regulated and what is the regulation of institutions which take action ultra-vires of law.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani remarked if brother of a man in a home is missing then in which situation his mother, sister and daughter is passing through. Police is better than all institutions because it takes action before all, be it wrong or right.

Federal government should ask from defence ministry and tell the court if there is any self-accountability process in the agencies. It is correct there can be mistake in working. But it does not mean they are not accountable.

Ambiguous terms in 'Nikah Nama' can't be used against bride: SC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that ambiguous terms in the 'Nikah Nama' (marriage contracts) could not be used against women.

"The bride has full freedom to express her consent before the terms and conditions are fixed in the marriage contract. If there is ambiguity or doubt in the terms and conditions of the marriage contract or in any entry or column, then the benefit will be given to the wife," the court observed.

The SC ruling said, "If the marriage certificate is filled by someone else without meaningful consultation of the bride, it cannot be used against the bride."

"It is settled law that if there is any ambiguity in the terms, it will be determined by the original intention of the parties."

Envoys call on FM; pledged to further strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar on Wednesday separately met with Canadian High Commissioner Leslie Scanlon and European Union Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka and discussed the bilateral ties between Pakistan and their respective countries. The Canadian high commissioner paid a courtesy call on the foreign minister. "They discussed bilateral relations, FM reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to deepen relations with Canada in political, economic and cultural domains; and encouraged Canadian companies to invest in Pakistan," Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on its official X account.

They discussed UNDP's work post the 2022 floods in Pakistan, Sustainable Development Goals and climate change. "Foreign Minister Dar expressed Pakistan's support for UNDP's work in climate resilience, SDGs, and socio-economic development," a post on X said.

Gillani calls for further promoting parliamentary relations b/w Pak, US

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani Wednesday appreciated the US government for its collaboration across various sectors and emphasized the need to enhance trade links for mutual benefit.

During the meeting with US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome, the chairman Senate stressed the need for increased cooperation to boost trade volume.

Both sides engaged in detailed deliberations on various aspects of the enduring friendship between Pakistan and the United States, said a news release.

Ambassador Blome extended heartiest congratulations to Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani on being elected as Chairman Senate and conveyed his best wishes for a successful tenure.

Expressing Pakistan's commitment to nurturing its long-standing friendly ties with the US, the Chair-



man Senate emphasized the importance of further promoting parliamentary relations between the two nations.

He underscored the pivotal role that parliamentary contacts can play in enhancing public and legislative engagement.

Recognizing the significant economic partnership between the two countries, Chairman Senate Gillani highlighted the US as Pakistan's largest trading partner.

Ambassador Blome commended the new economic team of Pakistan and expressed optimism regarding the ongoing discussions

between Pakistan and the IMF.

He praised the efforts of the Pakistan economic team and emphasized the potential for further economic cooperation between Pakistan and the US.

Acknowledging the positive economic indicators of Pakistan, the ambassador noted the downward trend in inflation and high dollar reserves, stating that the IMF's positive feedback would encourage investors.

He also highlighted the flourishing gaming industry in Pakistan and called for enhanced cooperation in the digital sector.

Pak wants cordial ties with neighbours: Asif

ISLAMABAD (INP): Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said Pakistan is willing to enjoy cordial relationship with the neighbouring countries including India. Talking to media on Wednesday, the defence minister said Taliban defeated the colonial powers without modern equipment which was a fact praiseworthy.

Punjab CM reviews housing project

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday reviewed the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' [Own Roof, Own Home] project.

Chairing a special meeting on the construction of model low-cost housing units for homeless low-income segments of

society, the CM ordered for constructing the best houses at minimum cost near cities. She ordered to consult Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners to get best of the best maps for these houses.

Earlier, the CM was briefed that 519 kanals of state land have been identified in five major cities including Lahore for construction of low-cost housing units for the homeless people.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Information and Culture Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari and MPA Sania Ashiq attended the meeting. Chief Secretary, SMBR, Chairman P.D, Secretary Housing, Secretary Finance, Commissioner Lahore and other relevant officers were also present in the meeting.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif presides over the meeting to review the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' [Own Roof, Own Home] project.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Ties with Tehran

The official visit by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, which ends today, has been marked by mutual praise, and promises to improve ties, particularly in the economic sphere.

The significance of the trip has been enhanced by the prevailing geopolitical tensions in the region, particularly Iran's conflict with Israel, poor ties between Tehran and the Western states, especially over the former's central role in the 'axis of resistance', as well as the unpleasant episode in January when Iran and Pakistan exchanged missile strikes.

Thankfully, whatever bitterness was engendered by the latter incident seems to have been forgotten, as Pakistan rolled out the red carpet for the Iranian leader. In Islamabad, Mr Raisi met the president, prime minister and army chief, and later headed to Lahore and Karachi to meet the respective provincial leaderships. Trade topped the Iranian president's agenda, while security issues were also discussed. Mr Raisi said the current level of bilateral trade was "unacceptable", and desired to see annual trade go up to \$10bn. Foreign sanctions, as well as the lack of proper banking channels, stand as major obstacles in enhancing bilateral commerce. Expanding the number of border markets can help remove these obstacles, and bring socioeconomic opportunities to border communities on both sides. Pakistan also seeks to expand foreign trade to improve its economic position. While searching for trade partners across the oceans should continue, we must work to expand regional commerce. As things stand, South Asia is among the world's least integrated regions. While resuming economic ties with India is more complicated, Pakistan should strive to improve trade relations with its western neighbours, Iran and Afghanistan. This can open pathways for Pakistani products to markets in Central Asia and greater Eurasia. Regarding security matters, violent non-state actors operating in the common border areas present challenges to both states' security. Therefore, it is welcome that an accord was signed on security cooperation. Both countries' security forces should cooperate with each other to neutralise malign actors and manage border security.

As for the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, the issue was obliquely referred to in a Pakistani statement, but there has been no major breakthrough. Mr Raisi mentioned that some actors did not want to see Pakistan-Iran relations grow. "It is not important," he said, dismissing critics. The US, meanwhile, has again cautioned that anyone doing business with Iran risks being sanctioned by America. Pakistan must take a long-term view of this problem. While ties with the US are important, should Pakistan seek American approval for all key economic and strategic decisions? Today, the US does not want the Iran pipeline to proceed. Tomorrow, if ties between Washington and Beijing nosedive, and the US asks Pakistan to reconsider CPEC, or our defence cooperation with China, will we comply?

More 'Moditva'

Mahir Ali

The impressive logistics of India's national elections inspire considerable international coverage. This year, the process initiated last Friday will culminate at the start of June, and the potential electorate includes around a tenth of humanity. In a few cases, election officials trudge for miles through hostile terrain to gather a handful of votes, sometimes just one or two.

Such demonstrations of devotion to democracy are indeed exceptional, even though their contribution to what ultimately counts — the result — may well be negligible. What is arguably even more remarkable is the extent to which the ruling BJP has gone to trample down on challengers ranging from the Congress to the currently imprisoned Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party.

Such actions betray a lack of confidence in achieving the declared goal of 'ab ki baar char sa paar' — the aim of winning more than 400 seats in the 543-strong Lok Sabha this time, a super-majority that could allow the Sangh Parivar to formally replace the liberal/secular/socialist elements of the Ambedkar-drafted constitution with the ideas of Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar.

The Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS bear testimony to the fact that the concept of Hindutva is hardly a novelty. It might be an exaggeration to claim that it lay dormant during the initial decades of independence, but it went mainstream only in the past three decades or so. Key signposts range from the rath yatra led by Lal Krishna Advani and the consequent demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya to the Godhra incident and the anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujarat in 2002. The

state's chief minister was considered to be complicit in the horrendous bloodletting, and was subsequently barred from travelling to several countries, including the US.

The barriers fell away when he (Narendra Modi) became prime minister a dozen years later. Today, he is valued by the West as the leader of a nation that is construed as a bulwark against China. His government can get away with pursuing pointless vendettas against Sikh proponents of Khalistan in Canada, the US, Britain and Australia, once the initial hoo-ha recedes. And there is precious little Pakistan can do about assassinations on its territory, which the Indian leadership was happy to boast about once the allegations had been publicised. It hardly comes as a surprise that the personnel involved with such operations were impressed by Mossad's activities and the Saudi evisceration of Jamal Khashoggi.

It's the domestic sphere, though, that is more worrying. The days when India could be perceived as an exemplar of democracy in the Global South are long gone. It is not just the BJP and the various longer-standing purveyors of Hindutva that have irrigated its bloodstreams which are to blame. The Congress, lately reduced to a rump, and many of its current allies in the INDIA coalition — the clumsily named Indian National Development Inclusive Alliance — are equally responsible for their failure to guide the nation towards its tryst with a less alarming destiny.

Indira Gandhi's Emergency nearly 50 years ago justifiably inspired a great deal of opposition. She suffered the consequences, and returned to power by democratic means. She

was assassinated by Sikh bodyguards whom she had refused to sack after the misguided military assault on the Golden Temple. The remaining son who succeeded her was assassinated by a Tamil suicide bomber following India's military intervention in Sri Lanka. The path to globalisation opened up under Manmohan Singh, and its consequences played into the opposition's hands.

Modi had no intention, though, of undermining neoliberalism under his watch. According to the World Inequality Database, inequality "began rising" after the early 1980s, and has skyrocketed since the early 2000s. Wealth concentration, it says, has been "particularly pronounced" since 2014. By 2022-23, the income share of the top 1pc was "among the highest in the world". As long as the Adanis and Ambanis are happy to fund the BJP, the disparities in wealth will only grow. That helps to explain why young middle-class Indians aspire to the 'donkey route' to the US, and less well-endowed workers seek dangerous jobs in Russia, Ukraine or Israel. An economic success story would not be exporting so much labour. The impressive growth figures, however, largely rely on what does not trickle down. Far more alarming, mind you, are fascist tendencies that place India in similar categories as Hungary, Italy and arguably Israel. Sure, it could emerge from the hole into which it has fallen — the south in general, and Kerala in particular, has thus far resisted Modi's purported charms. It may do so again, but it won't be enough to dislodge the PM, and five more years of Modi could destroy the dreams to which India's best minds once aspired. -- Courtesy Dawn

Reversal of roles

Rashid Amjad

While the finance minister trudges through the corridors of the IMF and World Bank, engaged in applying for a longer, larger new loan programme even before the current one has ended, the provincial governments back home are flush with funds — to the extent that they never consider raising any revenues on their own or spending prudently what they have.

For this, we have the seventh National Finance Commission (NFC) award to thank, and later the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which everyone hoped would spark less contentious, more equitable growth. But these hopes were not realised because the federation kept up its old habits — spending this year Rs360 billion on subjects it had devolved to the provinces and running up huge fiscal deficits that led to unsustainable domestic and foreign borrowing, despite the looming threat of default. The provinces lost any incentive to raise revenues on their own or spend their resources wisely.

Both the seventh NFC award and 18th Am-ndment are here to stay — and I strongly believe that the hopes and goals they sparked can still be realised, as empowering the provinces truly strengthens the federation and, with it, Pakistan itself.

While these awards transferred resources and devolved subjects (including agriculture and education) to the provinces, they did not explicitly change the provinces' role in the management of the economy. This oversight must now be urgently rectified.

What we suggest is reversing roles, given our current dismal economic situation. The

federation's primary role should be to restore and maintain macroeconomic stability while that of the provinces should be to serve as the major engine of private sector-led economic growth and job generation.

Let me elaborate. If Pakistan's arzi is approved by the IMF (and all signs are that it will) and the country will enter its fifth programme in the last 25 years), this will greatly ease the chances of covering the country's \$25bn annual external financing gap and help Pakistan avoid defaulting on its external debt. The conditionalities accompanying the IMF programme, however, will stifle economic growth to a 2.5-3.5 per cent growth rate at best over the next three to four years, which the Fund is already projecting. This is far lower than the minimum 7pc required to absorb the increase in the labour force and reduce poverty, which has increased substantially by all accounts post-2020.

Also, implementing the tightly paced economic reforms programmes that the IMF will monitor (with quarterly reviews of efforts to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio from 10pc to 15pc), privatising loss-making state-owned enterprises, and implementing energy sector reforms will be quite a handful for the federal government. Then, there is the task of attracting foreign investment — hopefully, not by selling the family silver at throw-away prices — and using the proceeds to reduce external debt and not for wasteful expenditures.

So, in these circumstances, where will economic growth come from during this period of stabilisation? This will require the provinces to build their capacity to reallocate their current re-

sources and adopt policies to achieve this new goal. As a starting point, each province should now set higher economic growth and job generation targets in the forthcoming 2024-25 budgets and annual development plans to help raise the national average. They must also build up their provincial database to monitor growth, job generation and poverty reduction.

But what concrete steps can the provinces take to fulfil this new role?

They could start by concentrating support in more labour-intensive, less import-intensive sectors now under their direct responsibility, namely, agriculture, small and medium enterprises, construction, housing, retail and services, especially IT. The provinces should also reorder their portfolio of development projects and prioritise those with lower capital-output ratios and shorter gestation periods as well as earmark specific projects for public-private partnerships.

Next, the provinces should rapidly expand their education and health services to reduce their very high numbers of out-of-school children and dropouts while improving learning outcomes. And most important, the provinces should direct their policies and support at all levels (municipal and local) towards the facilitation of private sector investment and higher capacity utilisation to generate more employment. Their success in galvanising the private sector will be the key to playing their new role as the major engine of growth and job generation.

That each major political party is running a major province should be incentive en-o-ugh to prove their mettle to the electorate. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Govt committed to double exports' volume in 5 yrs: PM

KARACHI (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed the confidence that the country's exports volume would be doubled over the next five years with the support of business community.

He said the government, in consultation with the business community, would chalk out a comprehensive policy framework to increase the exports that would ultimately help ensure sustained economic growth.

The export-led growth would also help resolve the country's

foreign exchange reserves' issue, he added.

"You are actually the backbone of the national economy as without your support, the government cannot bring the country out of economic crisis," the prime minister said while addressing the business community.

He asked the business community to sit with the government to resolve their issues and challenges as it was the only way to move forward, and bring development and prosperity to Pakistan.

"We should get together in the larger national interest. The brilliant minds should together find ways to

overcome the challenges and problems hindering the country's development and prosperity."

It was the only way to regain the country's lost glory, the prime minister said. PM Shehbaz highlighted that the government was fully focused on bringing revolution in sectors of agriculture, mines & minerals, information technology and industry.

He also expressed the government's resolve to work for reducing unemployment, poverty and inflation in the country, which, he said, could not be possible without the support of the business community.

He also expressed the government's resolve to work for reducing unemployment, poverty and inflation in the country, which, he said, could not be possible without the support of the business community.

Rupee sheds 02 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 02 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.39 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.37.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.6 and Rs 280.35 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 41 paise to close at Rs 297.57 against the last-day closing of Rs 297.16, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.79, whereas an increase of Rs2.03 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs346.01 compared to the last closing of Rs 343.98.

There was no change in the price Emirates Dirham as it closed at Rs75.79, and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paise to at Rs74.22.



KARACHI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing business community during his visit to Karachi.

Jam Kamal leads efforts to enhance IT Capacity for trade monitoring

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday chaired a meeting to assess the effectiveness and sufficiency of the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure of the Ministry of Commerce (MOC). The meeting was deliberated the current IT capabilities of the ministry, particularly in monitoring trade activities,

international imports and exports, remittances, and other key performance indicators (KPIs).

Minister underscored the indispensable role of digital solutions in facilitating the acquisition of accurate and comprehensive information and data essential for informed decision-making. It was enacted, but its further utilization and

enhancement need deliberation. Recognizing the transformative potential of technological advancements, he emphasized the imperative for leveraging digital tools to enhance the efficiency and precision of trade-related data monitoring and analysis. Furthermore, the Minister Kamal stressed the importance of fostering collaboration for exchange of information and data.

Pakistan's Maize Exports increases by 195%

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan has witnessed an extraordinary surge in maize exports, recording an unprecedented growth of 195% from July 2023 to February 2024, reaching \$324 million compared to a mere \$10 million during the same period last year.

Major maize markets for Pakistan include Vietnam, Malaysia, Korea, and Oman. The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), in collaboration with the Punjab Agriculture Department, has initiated a series of awareness seminars to explore export opportunities in maize production and its key areas. The inaugural seminar

was held on Ednesday in Okara, where trade and investment officers from Vietnam and Korea provided valuable insights into export requirements and potential opportunities for maize exports from Pakistan.

In the concluding session, local farmers' representatives voiced their challenges, while a leading exporter from Karachi highlighted the significance of maize exports. The session also saw participation from the Investment Officer and Counselor from Sahiwal Agriculture Department and TDAP representatives, focusing on the production technology showcased during the seminar.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where three ships namely, Xpress Salween, Maersk Detroit and Lokojo carrying Container and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal and Gasport Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile four more ships, MSC Sindy, Mara Thapolis, Lila Ace and Loxley with Containers, Chemicals and LPG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today morning. A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, X-Press Salween.

Pakistan catching ride on global EV boom

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan, in its timely joining the global trend, is ramping up cooperation with international EV giants to amplify its own competence.

Last month, Automobile brand Huazi Green Energy, a joint Pakistan-China venture, announced the plan to display the first electric car in Islamabad this month, achieving yet another score in Pakistan's EV endeavour.

In May, Chinese vehicle manufacturing company Huaihai in collaboration with its Pakistani partner announced that it is seeking to expand its

existing business by investing \$10 million in manufacturing electric vehicles, starting with two-wheeler and four-wheeler vehicles in Punjab.

Among the global players, China's presence in the international EV market has become too prominent to be neglected. Among the global EV sales, 59% are contributed by China, which is also the world's biggest EV producer, with 64% of global volume.

In the first half of this year, China's EV brand BYD witnessed a record-breaking 95.8% increase y-o-y of cumulative sales, snapping global sales champion.



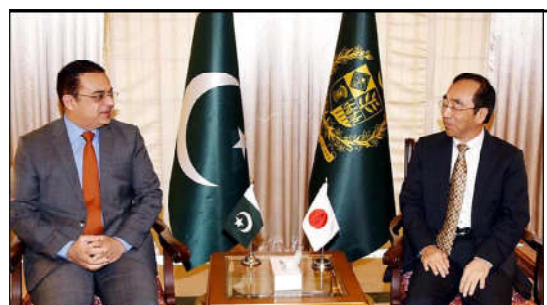
ISLAMABAD: Chairman IPO Pakistan Farukh Amil and Shazia Adnan, Director General (IPO) Pakistan addressing a press conference on curtain raiser of World Intellectual Property Day is celebrated every year on 26 April at IPO Pakistan Headquarters.

Machinery import surges by 30% in nine months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall machinery group witnessed an increase of 30 per cent during the first three quarters of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The total imports of the machinery group during July-March (2023-24) stood at \$5,854.931 million against the imports of \$4,493.283 million during the same period of the last year.

The import of agriculture sector machinery and equipment surged by 102.31 per cent from \$30.198 million to \$61.095; office machinery including data processing equipment 41.28 per cent from \$249.167 million to \$352.029 million; electrical machinery and apparatus 68.69 per cent from \$1,124.552 million to \$2,105.047 million; telecom related equipment 117.90 per cent from \$744.971 million to \$1,623.321 million; mobile phone 181.26 per cent from \$462.700 million to \$ 1,301.388 million and other apparatus 14.05 per cent.



ISLAMABAD: Wada Mitsuhiro, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Pakistan pays a courtesy call on the Honorable Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema.

LCCI for deferment of SROs hurting businesses

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has sought the government's help for deferment of amendments that are bound to bring businesses to a halt.

A LCCI spokesman told media here Wednesday that in a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, LCCI President Kashif Anwar attracted his attention towards recently introduced SROs 457(I)/2024, SRO 350(I)/2024 and SRO 1842(I)/2023 and said that they were

disproportionately affecting the businesses compliant with tax regulations and have brought the whole system to a halt. The SRO 350 links the buyers' ability to file tax returns to the compliance of their suppliers. Due to this measure, a reaction has been set in motion. The potential chain reaction of non-compliance among suppliers will undoubtedly bring the system to a grinding halt, affecting businesses at every stage of the supply chain.

KP cabinet takes decisions related to wheat procurement, health, education, power

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet on Wednesday met here under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and took several decisions about energy production, education, food security, procurement of wheat, and sustainable development.

The cabinet approved the rehabilitation and restoration of the 17-megawatt (MW) Ranolia Hydropower Project in Kohistan Lower. The Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) had already approved the project at a cost of Rs. 8.1 billion with the condition that the same will be processed for the approval of the provincial cabinet for inclusion as a non-ADP scheme. The cabinet approved its inclusion as a non-ADP scheme and financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank.

The cabinet also approved the acquisition of 327 kanal land for the 88 MW Gabral Kalam Hydropower project being financed by the World Bank in District Swat. On commissioning the project is expected to generate over Rs. 7.4 billion incomes per year for the Province. It also approved the additional compensation in respect of land and built-up property based on an independent valuation study for executing the 300 MW Balakot Hydropower project on Kunhar River Manshara. The cabinet approved the shifting of manual registration books to automated motor vehicle registration smart cards.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman addressing the opening session of the International Climate Change Conference organized by a private university in Sialkot.

Emergent measures under way to control effects of climate change: Governor

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that climate change is the biggest challenge facing the planet. The Punjab government is aware of the serious situation and measures are being taken on an emergency basis to deal with it. He expressed these views while addressing the opening session of the International Climate Change Conference organized by a private university in Sialkot today.

He said that due to climate change, Pakistan is among the top ten countries most affected by the unexpected increase in temperature, melting of glaciers and deforestation. He said that due to climate change, agriculture sector is suffering which would have adverse effect on economy. He underlined the need to adopt modern technology in agriculture sector. Governor Punjab said that fully fit vehicles should be allowed to ply on the roads and along with this, modern technology should be adopted in new vehicles. On this occasion, Governor Punjab

Muhammad Balighur Rehman also planted a sapling in the university lawn and prayed for the development and stability of the country. Governor Punjab appreciated the efforts of the university administration for holding an international conference on the important issue. Vice Chancellor Dr. Mujahid Kamran, Chairman Board of Governors Muhammad Islam also addressed the event. A large number of delegates including Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain and teachers were present in the ceremony.

Governor KP inaugurates Blossom Festa Fun Fair & Pet Show in KGMC

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali Wednesday visited Khyber Girls Medical College and formally inaugurated the Blossom Festa Fun Fair and Pet Show in the college premises. The Governor Haji Ghulam Ali inspected the various stalls set up by the students in the Fun Fair. The Governor encouraged the students to set up stalls containing food and drinks and other items. The Governor inspected the pets of various valuable breeds brought by the students in the pet show at the college.

He said it is a great and happy moment to see students' love for pets. "I'm happy to see female students actively participating in such activities."



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali inaugurates Blossom Festa Fun Fair during his visit to Khyber Girls Medical College.



GILGIT: Provincial Minister Gilgit-Baltistan addressing a press conference after cabinet meeting at CM Secretariat.

Zero tolerance against illegal encroachments: RCB Chief

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Rawalpindi Cantonment Board Ali Irfan Rizvi said that there would be no compromise against illegal encroachments in cantonment areas. The CEO said this regarding a comprehensive anti-encroachment operation which was carried out in various parts of the cantonment on Wednesday. All temporary or permanent encroachments outside shops will be removed and strict action will be taken against those obstructing the flow of traffic including pedestrians, he said. Those creating hurdles for public and traffic will not be tolerated, he added. Spokesman RCB, Rasheed Saqib informed that encroachments on footpaths and pedestrian areas were being removed for public convenience.

Minister says: Punjab govt allocated Rs 1 bln for providing motorbikes to students

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Provincial Transportation Minister Bilal Akbar said that the Chief Minister Youth Initiative is an education-friendly initiative for students on behalf of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. According to which the Punjab government has allocated a huge amount of 1 billion rupees as a subsidy for the provision of motorbikes free of interest in connection with the independence of students. He said this while

speaking to the participants of the webinar about the importance and usefulness of the Chief Minister's Youth Initiative to the students in a function held at Ghulam Muhammad Ghotvi Hall of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance Farooq Qamar, Secretary Regional Transport Authority Urooj Fatima, officers of Bank of Punjab, teachers of educational institutions, officers, and students were present in the ceremony.

70% mapping of Afghans residing in KP completed

PESHAWAR (APP): The mapping process of Afghan refugees residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has entered its final phase as according to the Home and Tribal Department KP on Wednesday, 70 percent of the task has been completed. It said 880,000 Afghan refugees were issued citizen cards of which 320,000 were residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Since November 2023 till date, 314,000 Afghans have repatriated to their native land. The mapping of Afghan refugees holding Afghan Citizen Cards would be completed by 30th April.

Mashal terms profound bond of friendship between Pak, China as source of pride

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Social Welfare, Special Education, and Women Empowerment, Mashal Yousafzai, has highlighted the profound bond of friendship between Pakistan and China, describing it as a source of immense pride. She emphasized China's unwavering support to Pakistan, especially during challenging times, citing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a prime example of this

enduring friendship. Yousafzai expressed these sentiments during her visit to China Window, a Chinese cultural center in Peshawar, where she praised the Chinese Embassy for providing the people of Peshawar with an invaluable opportunity to immerse themselves in Chinese culture. During her visit, Mashal Yousafzai visited various galleries of the cultural center, adding her remarks to the visitor's book and signing the friendship wall. She lauded the CPEC as a testament to the strong ties between the two nations.

KP to adopt fixed ST on services for lawyers, customs agent

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has decided to adopt a fixed sales tax on services for lawyers and customs agents instead of a percentage. The decision was taken in a meeting held on Wednesday between Advisor

to KP Chief Minister on Finance Muzammil Aslam and Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority Fouzia Iqbal. It was decided that KPRA will send recommendations to the Advisor for Finance to switch lawyers and customs agents from a percentage regime of sales tax.

International News

Fears grow for Rafah as Gaza crisis rages 200 days on

Monitoring Desk
GAZA STRIP: The Israeli aggression entered its 200th day as aid groups warned that Israeli plans to invade the southern city of Rafah where most Gazans have taken refuge would create an "apocalyptic situation". Fears have been rising that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will soon follow through on repeated threats to send troops into Rafah, where 1.5 million people have sought shelter, many in makeshift encampments. "Everybody seems to be on a countdown to war across the largest displacement camp on Earth, which is Rafah," Norwegian Refugee Council chief Jan Egeland said. Egeland warned that a ground assault on Rafah would be an "apocalyptic situation" and that humani-

tarian groups "are completely in the dark on how to mitigate this countdown to a catastrophe". Also on Tuesday, the United Nations rights office said it was "horrified" at reports of mass graves found at the Gaza Strip's two biggest hospitals after Israeli sieges and raids. Israel has repeatedly targeted Gazan medical facilities during the war, accusing Hamas of using them as command centres and to hold hostages abducted on October 7. Hamas denies the accusation. Gaza's Civil Defence agency said nearly 340 bodies were uncovered in the past three days of people killed and buried by Israeli forces at the Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis. Israel's army responded by saying that

claims it had buried Palestinian bodies were "baseless and unfounded", without directly addressing allegations that Israeli troops were behind the killings. The army said that "corpses buried by Palestinians" had been examined by Israeli troops searching for hostages and then "returned to their place". UN rights chief Volker Turk called for an "independent" probe into the deaths at Nasser and Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospitals, noting the "special protection" awarded to medical facilities under international law. The Israeli army carried out intense shelling overnight of Gaza City, correspondents and witnesses said, with the military saying it also struck Hamas positions in south Gaza.



People gather by a destroyed building at the site of a drop of humanitarian aid in the northern Gaza Strip.

UAE announces \$544m for repairs after record-breaking rains

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates announced \$544 million to repair the homes of Emirati families on Wednesday after last week's record-breaking rains caused widespread flooding and brought the oil-rich Gulf state to a standstill. "We learned great lessons in dealing with severe rains," said Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum after a cabinet meeting, adding that ministers approved "two billion dirhams to deal with damage to the homes of citizens". Wednesday's announcement comes more than a week after the unprecedented deluge lashed the desert country, where it turned streets into rivers and hobbled Dubai Airport.

The world's busiest for international passengers. "A ministerial committee was assigned to follow up on this file [...] and disburse compensation in cooperation with the rest of the federal and local authorities," said Sheikh Mohammed, who is also the ruler of Dubai, which was one of the worst hit of the UAE's seven sheikhdoms. The rainfall, the UAE's heaviest since records began 75 years ago, killed at least four people, including three Filipino workers and one Emirati. UAE authorities have not released an official toll. Cabinet ministers also formed a second committee to log infrastructure damage and propose solutions, Sheikh Mohammed said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.



United Arab Emirates announced \$544 million to repair the homes of Emirati families in a cabinet meeting.

Bill to ban TikTok in US clears Congress

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The United States Senate on Tuesday approved legislation requiring the popular social media app TikTok to divest from its Chinese parent company ByteDance or be shut out of the US market. The measure was part of a \$95 billion foreign aid package, including military assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, which has now cleared Congress and heads to President Joe Biden's desk. US and other Western officials have voiced alarm over the popularity of TikTok with young people, alleging it allows Beijing to collect data and spy on users. It has 170 million users in the United States alone. These critics also say TikTok is subservient to Beijing and a conduit to spread propaganda. China and the company strongly deny these claims. The bill, which could trigger the rare step of barring a company from operating in the US market.

Boat disasters in Africa, Europe leave 43 dead

Monitoring Desk
NAIROBI/WIMEREUX: Twenty-one migrants died on Tuesday in boat disasters off the coast of the Horn of Africa and trying to cross the English Channel from France to Britain. Bodies of 22 people were found off the coast of the Tunisian port city of Sfax in recent days. According to the UN's migration agency, at least 16 people are dead and 28 missing in a new migrant boat disaster off the coast of the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti. It was the second fa-

tal maritime accident on the perilous so-called Eastern Migration Route from Africa to the Middle East in as many weeks. Another vessel carrying mainly Ethiopian migrants sank in the same area off the Djibouti coast on April 8, claiming the lives of several dozen people. "Tragedy as boat capsizes off Djibouti coast with 77 migrants on board including children," the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

Taiwan happy with US aid package, China objects to arms sales

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said on Wednesday she was happy the US Congress had passed a sweeping foreign aid package which includes arms support for the island, as China urged Washington to stop selling weapons to Taipei. The United States is Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier even in the absence of formal diplomatic ties.

Ukrainian officials thank the US for its latest military aid to help stop Russia's onslaught

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukrainian officials on Wednesday expressed thanks for a fresh batch of U.S. military aid that threw Kyiv's armed forces a lifeline in their more than two-year war with Russia, even though the new supplies aren't expected to have an immediate impact on the battlefield. Ukrainian troops have faced acute shortages of shells and air defense systems as political quarrels in Washington held up the aid for months, allowing the Kremlin's forces to edge forward in some parts of eastern Ukraine by sheer weight of troop numbers and firepower in what has largely become a war of attrition. The U.S. decision came as the Kremlin's army extended its bombardment of the north-eastern Kharkiv region and Ukrainian long-range drones struck more fuel and energy facilities inside

Russia. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked the U.S. Senate for approving the \$61 billion aid package late Tuesday. "Ukraine's long-range capabilities, artillery and air defense are extremely important tools for the quick restoration of a just peace," Zelenskyy said on the social platform X. He urged quick deployment of the hardware that Kyiv expects to receive in the coming weeks and months. "The key now is speed," he said in a later post. Two Russian S-300 missiles struck Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city near the border with Russia, during the night, injuring six people, and another two hit the Kharkiv region town of Zolochiv where no casualties were reported, local officials said.

Mexico president eyes fresh pension fund ahead of election

Monitoring Desk
MEXICO CITY: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said he hopes to present a new fund aimed at boosting the lower pensions in the system on May 1, a month ahead of presidential elections. The creation of the fund, which is part of a pension reform proposed by the president in February, was approved on Monday by the country's lower house. It now needs to be

passed by the Senate. "I hope that on May 1, Labor Day, we can present a report to workers and give them the good news, that their pensions are guaranteed and that they will also be increased," Lopez Obrador said at a press conference. The opposition has warned that the move could put workers' savings managed by private companies at risk, a claim denied by the government.

Gaza protests grow at US colleges, thousands demonstrate in Brooklyn

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Protests against Israel filled streets in Brooklyn and escalated at universities across the United States, some of which included Jewish Passover Seders, as demonstrators demanded an end to civilian casualties in Gaza. The growing protests follow mass arrests of demonstrators at some East Coast universities in recent days, and show a deepening dissatisfaction in the United States, historically Israel's most important ally, with the course of the fight-

ing with Hamas. Pro-Palestinian protests have followed President Joe Biden, a self-declared "Zionist", for months. At universities, protests have recently grown to encampments that draw students and faculty of various backgrounds, including of Jewish and Muslim faiths, that host teach-ins, interfaith prayers, and musical performances. A large Brooklyn street protest reached a standoff on Tuesday when New York police began to arrest people over disorderly conduct, restraining those who refused to move with zip ties.

North Korea officials visit Iran in a rare public trip

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: A North Korean delegation led by the cabinet minister for international trade is visiting Iran, the North's official media said on Wednesday in a rare public report of an exchange between the two countries believed to have secret military ties. The minister for external economic relations, Yun Jong Ho, left Pyongyang on Tuesday by air leading a ministry delegation to visit Iran, the North's KCNA news agency said. It gave no other detail.

Turkmenistan advances TAPI energy project with strong commitment to international law

ISLAMABAD (PR): Turkmenistan is making significant progress on the TAPI natural gas pipeline, which aims to supply 33 billion cubic meters annually to South Asia. Speaking at the Turkmen Energy Investment Forum (TEIF 2024) currently being held in Paris, Muhammetmyrat Amanov of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited highlighted that the Turkmenistan section of the pipeline is complete and the ongoing discussions to advance the project beyond Turkmenistan are in strict alignment with international standards.

The project emphasizes environmental sustainability by leveraging natural gas to reduce emissions significantly compared to coal and oil, thereby tackling indoor pollution and enhancing regional air quality.

Importantly, Turkmenistan is implementing the project in strict adherence to international law. Mr. Amanov emphasized, "In light of the ongoing Project developments, Turkmenistan remains committed to upholding international law, fulfilling its obligations, and adhering to international norms and regulations." This approach reaffirms Turkmenistan's dedication to global cooperation and legal integrity in executing the TAPI project.



Looking ahead, the project's focus is shifting to the Herat Offtake Strategy in Afghanistan, which will play a critical role in environmental protection by reducing air pollution, while also contributing to maintaining public safety and further promoting the project. Additionally, it will provide early revenue streams and increase confidence amongst lenders.

Upon completion, TAPI will significantly impact the energy landscape in South Asia, supporting energy security and promoting regional development, all while maintaining the highest standards of international legal practice.

If federation wants to provide roti at cheap rate then what is problem: IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ordered Additional Attorney General (AAG), Advocate General (AG) and responsible officer from DC office to appear before it on Thursday in connection with petition filed against the rates of roti and Nan fixed by the government in Islamabad.

The petition filed against the rates of roti and nan fixed by the government in Islamabad came up for hearing Wednesday.

Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri took up for hearing petition filed by president Nanbai Welfare Association (NWA).

The counsel for petitioner said through the notification issued on April 15, the price of roti was reduced from Rs 25 to 16 and price of nan from Rs 30 to 20.

Counsel Umar Ijaz Gillani said Punjab government had issued notification about Sasti roti on April 14. Control general issued this notification while copying Punjab government notification.

Under price control act only federal government can issue notification.

Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri inquired what is problem in IHC if federal government wants to give roti at cheap rate.

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Fear of poisoning Bushra Bibi: IHC orders for medical check up and presentation of test report till Monday

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ordered for medical check up of Bushra Bibi besides presenting the test report till Monday on apprehension of wife of PTI founder that she was poisoned.

The petition seeking court's permission for medical check up of Bushra Bibi in view of apprehension that she was poisoned came up for hearing before IHC on Wednesday.

Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb while expressing resentment over non implementation of court's orders of previous hearing remarked why our orders have not been implemented.

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ISLAMABAD: Visitors are looking art work of artist Tufiq Ahmed during a workshop titled "The Guiding Light" at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), in the Federal Capital.

Young officers visit PID for briefing on govt principal public relations agency

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of young probationary officers from the Information Service Academy visited the Press Information Department (PID) in Islamabad to receive a briefing on the roles, functions, and operational procedures of the government's principal public relations agency.

Arshad Munir, Executive Director General of the Information Service Academy, led the delegation. Upon their arrival at the PID headquarters, they received a warm welcome from Ms. Tahira Saeda, Director General Advertisement, and Ms. Aabreen Gul Shahid, Director General Administration.

As part of their exposure to government media

operations, the probationary officers received detailed presentations from PID officials on journalist engagement, advertisement management, publication of official materials, and administrative procedures. They had the chance to engage in discussions and interact with experienced professionals from the department. Arshad Munir expressed gratitude to the PID leadership for accommodating the visiting delegation and offering valuable insights into the operations of the nation's leading media communications agency. He expressed optimism that the experience would be immensely beneficial for the young officers in preparing them for their forthcoming roles.

Rizvi meets with print media journalists at CPO

ISLAMABAD (APP): According to details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, met with print media journalists at the Central Police Office (CPO) Islamabad, a public relations officer said.

He said that, IGP Islamabad expressed gratitude to all journalists and informed that Islamabad Police is taking initiatives to promote community policing in the federal capital.

Moreover, special measures are being taken to provide facilities with all possible amenities and to combat crimes. He said, "I am confident that as a leader, you can provide public services in various ways. Our intention is to provide relief to the people and to combat crime." He further informed the journalists that Islamabad Police are taking comprehensive measures to ensure the protection of officers and officials.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director of the Directorate of Workers Education, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Rai Mohammad Akbar on Wednesday said the Worker Education organization was providing training to 0.3 million workers of 350 industries in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad in different phases. Addressing a ceremony to clean up the land and show solidarity with the sanitary workers in collaboration with the Directorate of Workers Education (DWE) and the Japanese organization KAMATO here at JET Islamabad Park, he said the organization was teaching free off cast in German, Arabic, Japanese and Korean languages and was working on a mandatory online training course, said a press release issued here.

Rai Akbar said, "Cleaning workers are very important members of our society thanks to them who help us enjoy a clean environment and it is the responsibility of every person to take care of cleanliness around him or her."

He said, "We are conducting online mandatory training program for the expatriates going abroad."

DWE providing training to 0.3m workers in twin cities

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ISLAMABAD: A group photo of delegation of Information Service Academy (ISA) with senior officers of Press Information Department (PID)



ISLAMABAD: President of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Prof Dr Hathal bin Hamoud Al-Otaibi, and Rector IIUI, Dr Samina Malik, call on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Tarar urges sweeping operation against ETPB encroachments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar Wednesday emphasized the need for a significant operation to remove encroachments on the land of the Evacuee Trust Property (ETPB) nationwide during his recent address.

Replying to a calling attention notice in the National Assembly, he said that dedicated anti-encroachment teams have been established for this purpose, with full support from the federal government.

Azam Nazeer emphasized the gravity of the situation, noting that district

Nankana has grappled with unresolved land disputes spanning back to 1965, affecting 16,931 acres of agricultural land and involving various local stakeholders.

The minister also referred to a regrettable event in 2016 when the ETPB office in Nankana was set on fire, subsequent to previous successful operations against illegal constructions in 2015.

He highlighted that the Supreme Court had established a commission, led by former senior police officer Shoaib Suddle and in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency

(FIA), to investigate 1,447 acres of land unlawfully held by housing societies and towns.

Underlining the government's steadfast commitment to tackling encroachments, he highlighted the necessity of a thorough action plan. He reassured that the government would take into account Supreme Court directives and suggestions from the Shoaib Suddle Commission report when formulating effective strategies.

Additionally, he confirmed the active engagement of local administrations and communities in the endeavour.

Pak, Portugal discuss bilateral, regional, global issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Wednesday said that Pakistan and Portugal enjoy a multifaceted and friendly relationship marked by shared interests and a common stance on various regional and international matters.

It is high time to enhance political, cultural, economic, and people-to-people connections between the two countries the speaker said during a meeting with the Portuguese Envoy to Pakistan, Manuel Frederico Pinheiro Da Silva, who called on him, said a news

release.

In the meeting, the two sides discussed various bilateral, regional, and global issues. They expressed contentment with the current state of bilateral relations and reaffirmed their joint resolve to further expand and diversify mutually beneficial cooperation. While discussing parliamentary relations, the Speaker underscored the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening bilateral ties, particularly through expanding cooperation between parliamentary friendship groups and the exchange of parliamentary delegations.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal Manuel Frederico Pinheiro Da Silva called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House.

Vietnam hails Gandhara Corridor project for cultural tourism promotion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Vietnam in Pakistan, Nguyen Tien Phong on Wednesday hailed the proposed Gandhara Corridor Project as a major vehicle of regional connectivity, interfaith harmony and cultural tourism.

While delivering the keynote address on "Envisioning Comprehensive Pakistan-Vietnam Cooperation: Prospects and Opportunities" organized by the NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS), a leading think-tank of NUST, said a press release.

The ambassador said that Gandhara tourism is a symbol of the shared Buddhist heritage, and could attract Vietnam tourists.

He said that several historical archaeological Gandhara sites located in different parts of Pakistan's cities including Taxila, Peshawar, Mardan, and Swat are sacred holy places in the eyes of Buddhists and have potential to attract international tourists from Vietnam and other countries. He emphasized that devising a joint strategy in

this regard could generate multiple opportunities for mutual cooperation.

On cultural connectivity, he said that there is an urgent need to encourage increased cultural contacts and trade exchanges between young Pakistanis and Vietnamese for a sustainable, long-term bilateral partnership.

It is worth mentioning that Member National Assembly (MNA) Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankar recently introduced a bill in the National Assembly to establish the Gandhara Corridor to connect Pakistan with the Buddhist majority countries, including Vietnam.

Recalling the bilateral diplomatic relations, the envoy said, "Vietnam and Pakistan have celebrated 50 years of relations," and "Pakistan has always supported Vietnam in all the international forums." While elaborating on the bilateral cooperation between the two countries, he said that Vietnamese professionals can help Pakistani counterparts in value addition in many business.

CM GB calls on Minister for Privatisation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan Wednesday called on Minister for Privatisation Abdul Aleem Khan and discussed matters relating to infrastructure development.

Gilgit Baltistan Agriculture Minister Engineer Muhammad Anwar and Education Minister Shahzad Agha were also present on this occasion, said a press release.

The meeting discussed construction of RC bridge, Tatta Pani and Karakoram Highway, opening of Babuser Tunnel and road construction, construction of Shotar, Jaglot and Skardu.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Hajj permits start for domestic pilgrims in Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Saudi Arabia is set to start issuing permits for citizens and Muslim foreign residents who will perform upcoming Hajj pilgrimage, Gulf News reported Wednesday.

The permits for the domestic pilgrimage will be issued via the government platform Absher and the Saudi Ministry of Hajj's website.

In February, Saudi Arabia opened e-registration for its citizens and Muslims expatriates, who wish to perform Hajj due this year in June.

The Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj unveiled four pilgrimage packages with their prices ranging from SR4,099 to SR13,265 depending on accommodation level.

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a crackdown against vehicles with tinted windows and unauthorized/fancy number plates, the Excise and Taxation (E&T) Department in the Federal Capital has intensified its operations.

In the past month alone, 2895 vehicles were inspected, resulting in the removal of 1066 tinted glasses and 800 fancy number plates. Talking to APP Spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory Administration, Dr Abdullah Tabassum said that on the instructions from the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad.

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President lauds IIUI's role in promotion of higher education; assures support

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday lauded the role of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) in the promotion of higher education in the country and assured his all-out support for the institution's uplift.

The president said this in a meeting with IIUI President Professor Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi and Rector Professor Dr. Samina Malik here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The university rector apprised the president of the IIUI's performance and services in the higher education sector.

In the meeting, they discussed the overall per-

formance of the institution as well as its administrative matters.

The president was told that the IIUI had formulated a Strategic Plan 2022-2026 to promote research and development, innovation and digitalisation that would also help improve the university's financial and administrative affairs.

In the briefing, President Zardari was told that Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was extending assistance for the university's uplift and development as it had already funded the construction of a new university block and for the provision of modern educational facilities.



Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Haji Gulbar Khan called on Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan in Islamabad.

Opposition collaboration vital for overcoming national hurdles: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Faisal Karim Kundi, a senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), called upon opposition parties on Wednesday to engage in dialogue to navigate the country through its challenges. Addressing a press conference along with Nadeem Afzal Khan and Syed Sibtal Bukhari, he emphasized that opposition parties must refrain from engaging in the politics of blame and instead focus on improving the lives of the people.

Faisal Kundi remarked that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has divergent views on the by-elections, given that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has accepted the poll outcomes, while the opposition leader has rejected them.

About the recent visit of Iranian President, he said that Pakistan has always spoken about Palestine and Kashmir and during his visit Pakistan has also always raised his voice for Kashmir and Palestine issues.

IGP Islamabad briefed officers and officials of the Dolphin Squad

ISLAMABAD: According to details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi briefed the officers and officials of Dolphin Squad, a public relations officer.

He said that senior police officers were also present on the occasion.

He said that it was necessary for me to meet with you all while briefing the appointed officers and officials of the Dolphin Squad.

Allah has entrusted me with the responsibility to protect the lives and property of people by working together with you, he added.

Moreover, from now on, all officials, from constables

to IG, will be called police officers.

Your affiliation is with an institution where the best way to please Allah is to facilitate ease for Allah's servants. We have made a promise to Allah and taken an oath to uphold it.

He further stated that this department is the department of martyrs, warriors, and brave hearts.

You must effectively crack down on criminals. Seeing your uniform should instill fear in the hearts of criminals.

All police officers and officials should make patroling effective in the federal capital to curb crime.



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Same charges in different cities IHC reserves judgment on petition against registration of cases against Sheikh

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has reserved judgment on the petition against registration of cases in respect of former interior minister Sheikh Rashid on the same charges in Islamabad and other cities. IHC inquired from investigating officer "Taftishi officer sabh tell us where are the words of Billo Rani."

The investigating officer replied there is USB which will be presented by him.

The case against the registration of cases on the same charge against Sheikh Rashid in different cities including Islamabad came up for hearing in IHC Wednesday.

Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri remarked what words have been told in the report they are not in FIR.

The court remarked statement was given here and how the case was registered in Karachi.

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