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In meeting with IMF chief PM reiterates commitment to put economy back on track

PM thanks IMF chief for her support to Pakistan; Kristalina Georgieva appreciates premier for timely securing SBA last year

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday met with Managing Director (MD) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva wherein he reiterated his government's commitment to put Pakistan's economy back on track.



A PM Office press release.

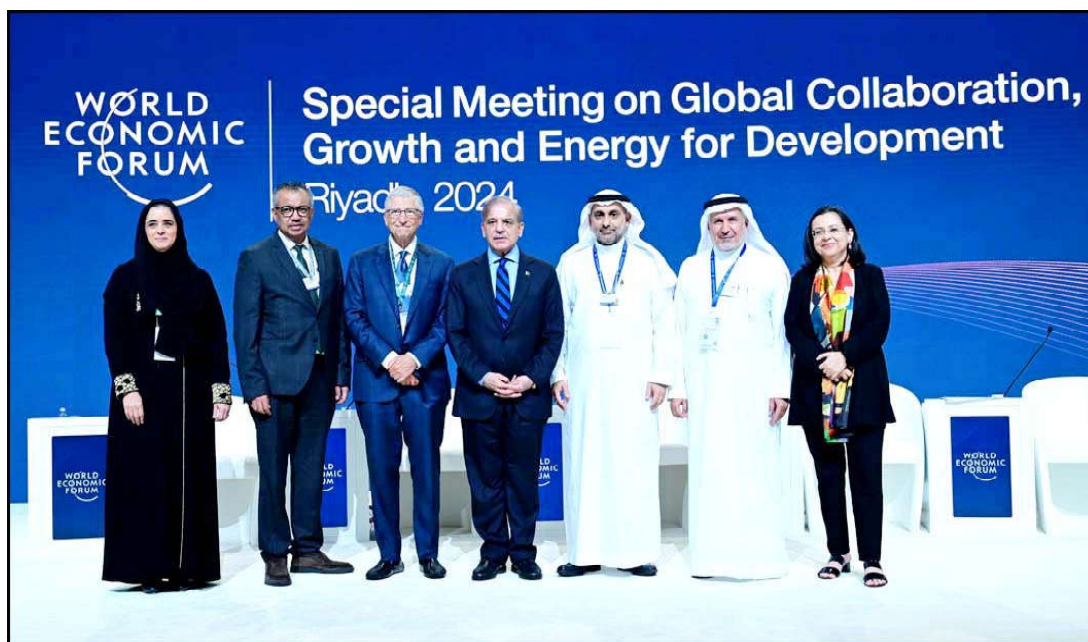
In the meeting held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Special Meeting here, the prime minister said that he had directed his financial team, led by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb to carry out structural reforms, ensure strict fiscal discipline and pursue prudent policies that would ensure macro-economic stability and sustained economic growth, according to

The IMF chief appreciated the prime minister's leadership for timely securing the SBA last year. Both sides also discussed Pakistan entering into another IMF program to ensure that the gains made in the past year were consolidated and its economic growth trajectory remained positive.

IMF MD shared her institution's perspective on the ongoing program with Pakistan, including the review process.

This was the first meeting between the prime minister and IMF MD since his re-election. They last met in Paris in June 2023 on the margins of the Summit for New Global Financial Pact.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also extended an invitation to the IMF MD to visit Pakistan at her convenience.



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the panelists of a session "Redefining Global Health Agenda" of World Economic Forum's Special Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development.



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif speaks at a session "Redefining Global Health Agenda" of World Economic Forum's Special Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development.

PM, Amir of Kuwait discuss bilateral ties

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday met the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Special Meeting in Riyadh and discussed bilateral ties.

that would serve the best interests of the peoples of both countries.

The prime minister thanked His Highness the Amir for sending him a warm congratulatory letter upon his re-election.

Pakistan and Kuwait had signed a number of MoUs and agreements to deepen cooperation in trade and investment in November 2023. The prime minister assured the Kuwaiti leadership that these MoUs and agreements would be implemented in an efficient and timely manner.

While congratulating His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on assuming the role of Amir, the prime minister expressed his desire to work closely with His Highness to transform bilateral ties into a mutually beneficial economic partnership

He said that the climate change issue had also completely changed the landscape. Pakistan was not responsible for any emissions in the world, he said, adding but in the year 2022, it witnessed the worst climate triggered floods which hugely devastated the infrastructure and buildings and as a consequence, they had to spend billion of rupees to rehabilitate the affected people.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that for the rehabilitation efforts, they sought costly loans. "Can a developing country like Pakistan afford it?" he questioned.

PM calls upon bridging gap between Global South, North in health sector

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday while terming the global inequity in health sector as "the first and foremost problem" called upon bridging the widening gap between the Global South and the Global North.

Expressing his views in a session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) regarding global health, the prime minister said that the Covid-19 pandemic had exposed the existing gaps largely between the Global North and Global South in terms of provision of health facilities and distribution of vaccines.

He said that the climate change issue had also completely changed the landscape. Pakistan was not responsible for any emissions in the world, he said, adding but in the year 2022, it witnessed the worst climate triggered floods which hugely devastated the infrastructure and buildings and as a consequence, they had to spend billion of rupees to rehabilitate the affected people.

International powers do not want stability in Pakistan: Member Türkiye Parliament

Ali Sahin says Türkiye, Pakistan can play a leading role in the region

ANKARA (INP): Ali Sahin member of Türkiye Parliament and Chairman Türk-Pak Parliamentary Friendship Group has categorically stated that International powers do not want stability in Pakistan and do not see it developed and prosper.

"There are several conspiracies being hatched to weaken and divide Pakistan, this issue needs to be addressed properly", said Ali Sahin who is also central leader of the current ruling Türkiye Justice and Development Party (AKP) in an interview to a selected group of journalists, along with Shabana Ayaz head of Türk Pak Women Forum was also part of the panel.

Ali Sahin got his higher education in Karachi and served in Türkiye missions in Pakistan at various capacities and has a lot wonderful memories for the country. In the interview apart from shedding light at

various international issues shared his personal experience and good memories during the period he got education in Pakistan, he is fond of Pakistani cuisines.

Ali Sahin said that Pakistan is situated at very important geographical position and it is very important for country to be economically stronger. Political and economic stability is crucial for Pakistan enabling to play a leading role in the region.

To a question about the current awful situation in Palestine he said "We are trying our best to bring to an end to the present horrifying situation". Türkiye and Pakistan are two twin sons of the Islamic and they can play a leading role to culminate the reign of terror let loose by the aggressor Israel, but there exist no such mechanism at present to deal with the



situation.

Continuing, he said Islamic countries are poor and have limited sources and when the western countries interfere in our problems and problems increase manifolds. He reminded the United States came to solve the problem of Afghanistan, and for almost 10 years its butchered million of people but the problem was still unsolved, "Terrorism did not culminate but increased".

He is advocate of further cementing the existing ties between two

brotherly Islamic countries Turkey and Pakistan through boosting trade, defense and cultural activities.

Ali Sahin regretted that economic and trade relations between Türkiye and Pakistan are not strong enough. There exists a bilateral trade of only 1.2 billion dollars between the two countries which is negligible. The population of Pakistan is 25 million, while the population of Türkiye is eight and a half million and the level of trade needed to be boosted.

He added existing barriers between the relationships must be removed. In the last 10 years, our relationship with Pakistan in the defense sector has grown considerably. The Türkiye has made remarkable achievement in the defense sector. There is a need to run a common defense project between Türkiye and Pakistan.

To bring peace to the Middle East, the relationship between Türkiye and Pakistan should be improved and strengthened. The mechanism between Türkiye and Pakistan should be strengthened.

He pointed out that Türkiye is working on an important project of developing roads, linking four neighbor countries including Türkiye, Iraq, Qatar and Emirates and in the end its connection with west to boost trade activities.

FM Ishaq Dar appointed deputy prime minister



ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has designated Minister of Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar as Deputy Prime Minister.

The Cabinet Division had issued the notification of the appointment. At present, the foreign minister is accompanying

the prime minister on his visit to Saudi Arabia.

Dar was appointed as the country's foreign minister after the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) formed a coalition government following the February 8 elections.

Dar, 73, a chartered accountant and a seasoned politician, is also a close relative of, and close aide to, PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif.

The appointment of four-time finance minister as foreign minister suggested a ramped up role for economics in the nation's diplomacy as the country tries to secure another International Monetary Fund Deal and shore up external financing from foreign capitals.



LAHORE: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani addressing to Asma Jahangir conference.

PEMRA urges IHC to exclude Justice Sattar from audio leak case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has formally appealed to Justice Babar Sattar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to step aside from overseeing the audio leak case.

PEMRA — a key party in the audio leak case — has filed a supplementary application before the IHC ahead of its forthcoming hearing scheduled for Monday, around the contention that Justice Sattar should recuse himself from the case due to a previous IHC bench having already addressed a similar matter.

The application underscores the importance of continuity, advocating that the bench previously involved in a related matter should continue to handle the ongoing petitions. Justice Sattar was presiding over petitions filed by Najam Saqib, the son of former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar, and Bushra Bibi, the spouse of former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Continuity of democracy only solution to all issues, says Senate chairman

LAHORE (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has said that continuity of democracy is the only solution to all national problems.

He expressed these views while addressing the concluding session of the Asma Jahangir Conference 2024 as a special guest on Sunday. While keeping political differences aside, he said that all political parties should come together for the country's progress and fulfill their responsibilities. He said that elimination of violence and promotion of tolerance are essential for establishment of a peaceful society.

He said that the Pakistan People's Party paid several sacrifices for the restoration of democracy. He said that the implementation of the Constitution 1973 by the PPP founder leader and former prime minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was a significant achievement. He said that differences of opinion are a beauty of democracy, adding that everyone must play their role collectively for the national interest. He said that in our era, there were no political prisoners.

The senate chairman said that Asma Jahangir's services for human rights and democracy should always be remembered. He said that participating in the conference is an honor for him, and he congratulates both daughters and the organizer for the successful conference. Gilani said that the vision of Asma Jahangir for human rights should not be overlooked. He said that democracy is the guarantor of human rights and the sole solution to all problems. He said that all political parties, including the PPP, have always supported the supremacy of the constitution, democracy, and the rule of law. He said that a charter of democracy was made between former prime minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and PML-N Chief Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. He said that the political leaders need to define their direction based on national interests.

Farooq H. Naik, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Pakistan Bar Council and former Law Minister, said that Asma Jahangir's services for human rights should not be ignored.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar addressing at 37th Convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU).

Tarar links progress to education

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar said on Sunday that Islam underlines the importance of education and cleanliness and no nation could excel without acquiring education.

"Education is a personality building instrument and it also refines a person. An educated person or an educated mother contributes a lot to society besides helping rise standards," he added.

Addressing a convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University held at Idara-i-Nazaria-i-Pakistan here,

Azam said that country was full of potential and Pakistanis were proving their mettle in various fields all over the world. "It is a high time to make collective efforts to steer the country out of existing challenges," he maintained.

he said he was honoured to attend the ceremony and congratulated the students for completing their degrees. He said, "The credit goes to teachers, parents and Allama Iqbal Open University for producing such talented students." Azam Nazeer Tarar said being Pakistani it was a matter of pride for all of us that Allama Iqbal Open University had been established in 1974 as a first distance learning university in the region.

The federal minister said that good teachers, skillful staff and best policies were required for making a prestigious university. "Education and health are among top priorities of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. When he served as Punjab Chief Minister in past, he had focused on school education, restructuring of universities.

Two terrorist killed in DI Khan IBO

RAWALPINDI (Online): Security Forces have conducted an intelligence based operation in Dera Ismail Khan District on reported presence of terrorists on Sunday.

During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between troops and terrorists, and resultantly two terrorists; Terrorist Faheem Nawaz Gandapuri and Terrorist Mohsin Nawaz, were killed.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorists who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the Security Forces as well as innocent civilians including target killings and extortion.

Reconstruction, renovation work on Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed's Shrine completed

SWABI (Agencies): The Pakistan Army has successfully concluded the reconstruction and renovation work on the shrine of the revered Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed in Swabi.

The meticulously executed project, undertaken by the Pakistan Army, witnessed completion within an impressive timeframe of four months.

In a testament to honoring the legacy of the valiant martyr, the newly renovated shrine now stands adorned with commemorative photographs and artifacts, meticulously curated to reflect the profound essence of Cap-



tain Karnal Sher Khan's life and sacrifices.

A solemn yet dignified ceremony was organized at the completion of the reconstruction, symbolizing a moment of reverence and remembrance for the heroic deeds of Captain Karnal Sher Khan. Corps Commander Peshawar, Lieutenant General Hasan Azhar Hayat, presided over the inauguration of the monument, where he laid a floral wreath at the mausoleum and offered prayers in memory of the martyr.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Return to the helm

Nawaz Sharif is set to take up the reins of PML-N party president once again — seven long years after he was barred from holding the position following his disqualification as prime minister in the Panama Papers case.

Today, with cases against him a thing of the past, Mr Sharif will formally assume the party position that, in his stead, had been filled by his younger brother PM Shehbaz Sharif. Publicly, his party may say that while this is a welcome development, there should be no deep speculation about what the move means for PML-N affairs. After all, PM Sharif's decisions have been endorsed by his elder brother.

But given the country's state of affairs, the delicate state of civil-military relations and the role of the judiciary, the formal return of Nawaz Sharif to the helm of party affairs is significant. No doubt, the younger Sharif's decisions largely have the blessings of his elder brother, but it is no secret that there is a difference of tone between the two when it comes to setting the party narrative.

While one prefers to avoid rocking the boat and is open to taking direction, the other has a penchant for asserting himself and challenging the existing dynamics of power. That latter narrative was conspicuously absent during the PML-N leaders' election campaign — a factor that some of the more vocal party members say contributed to the PML-N's poor electoral performance.

The PML-N's internal dynamics have been turbulent, with important voices like Rana Sanaullah, Saad Rafique, and Javed Latif expressing differing opinions on party policies and the role of the military in politics. Mr Sanaullah's recent statements about 'undoing the injustice' of Nawaz Sharif's disqualification reflect a sense of grievance that has not entirely dissipated, and hint at undercurrents of discontent within the party.

With Nawaz Sharif as PML-N president, will we see more such grievances being aired? The PML-N's future direction will depend heavily on his ability to build consensus within the party and to manage the inevitable tensions that arise from differing opinions.

Nawaz Sharif's return to the position of party president comes at a time when the economy is under immense strain, with inflation soaring and public discontent rising. The political landscape is equally fraught, with the establishment casting a dark shadow over any attempt at political autonomy.

More importantly, at 74 years of age, and less energetic and spirited than he was seven years ago, Mr Sharif's health and stamina will reflect in his decision-making and the party meetings he chairs.

He will have to deftly navigate through tumultuous waters, but whether he can strike a balance between asserting democratic authority and avoiding direct confrontation with the establishment remains to be seen. Will buried hatchets remain buried? Time will tell.

No child's play

Muna Khan

I have a distinct memory of sitting at my dear friend Duc's cafe-cum-gallery in Hanoi watching CNN discuss Barack Obama's foreign policy right after he became president in 2009. All the pundits were asking whether 'Afghanistan would become his Vietnam'.

Those of us at the cafe, including young Vietnamese, did a double-take. The 20-year American war (as it is called in Vietnam) ended in 1975, and in the 30 or so years since, the country had transformed from being one of the poorest in the world to "an economic miracle" as described by the World Economic Forum. The reference to the war had different meanings to my friends: for older friends, it was a reminder about the terrible suffering their families faced, while the younger generation — born after the government introduced 'doi moi', economic and political reforms in 1986 — did not have a connection to that war, outside school lessons, state narratives, war museum visits etc.

The American media, however, seemed obsessed with making those comparisons. Afghanistan would become America's longest war shortly after Obama took charge, beating the one in Vietnam, in which 58,000 Americans died. I understood the comparisons back then: support for the war in Vietnam was so low that historians believe president Johnson chose not to run a second time. Would Obama meet a similar fate if he didn't 'fix' Afghanistan, CNN types asked.

Duc, ever so wise, joined us in the eye rolls but added "the media doesn't understand young people".

The media's infantilisation of young people, aided ably by the fear-mongering right

wing, has continued. Young people, we're told, don't know better (Greta Thunberg, are a threat to society (think of Aurat March here) or entitled snowflakes.

These descriptions weighed on me recently as I prepared for a guest lecture to journalism students at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). I was excited to speak to students at this state university against the backdrop of pro-Palestine protests following the Oct 7 attack. Did I understand right that young people were not buying old narratives about America's alliance with Israel? Were we watching students dismantle the old order?

It was ambitious to expect answers in a 50-minute session, in which I did most of the talking. But the two students who asked questions made me realise something was different this time. The questions were not rooted in nationalism or security or fear of a group/religion. I felt hopeful that day in class and then at a cafe on campus discussing the stupidity of the University of Southern California revoking valedictorian Asna Tabassum from speaking at graduation in fear she may say something pro-Palestinian. (As I write this, the USC has cancelled its graduation ceremony.)

A few days later, Texas law enforcers would descend upon the campus, arresting dozens of students, and faculty too, for protesting Israel's war in Gaza. Campuses across America have become battlegrounds for issues like free speech and are a reminder of the deep anti-Muslim sentiment in the country.

As witnessed since the 1960s — be it student demonstrations against the Vietnam war, gun violence, civil rights, George Floyd's

murder — demonstrations also grow in response to police brutality. It's especially infuriating when universities, meant to protect students and free speech, call in the police to quell it.

And the media just doesn't seem to get what the kids are saying this time: they side more with Palestine than they do Israel.

A poll by The Economist and YouGov in December found that one in five young Americans think the Holocaust is a myth. Around a quarter of the respondents said Jews have too much power in the US. Things are different now, starting with de-mographics. Students are more racially diverse, rely on social media for their news because the mainstream media has failed them. They don't view the world through a lens of 'with us or against us', and they can see Israel is punching down. A white female student at the cafe at UT Austin told me she believed Israel is the coloniser today. Protests keep erupting because powerful forces are rarely held accountable for their actions. You can feel that frustration among students who are fed up with their country's policies, rooted in racial injustice and anti-poor. They're angry at the direction the US is going. They fear their future is at stake. Is this adequately reported or are they being framed as part of some plot against the US? (In Pakistan, the media often frames youth-led protests as anti-state.)

I don't have answers but I know more police isn't an option. How does attacking the group demanding justice help? Students' actions are also being blamed for the likely return of Trump as president. This is a twisted read of the situation. No one should buy it. -- Courtesy Dawn

India today

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

As India navigates a critical phase in its ideological journey under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, its ambitious Hindutva-driven agenda raises questions about its future direction and impact on regional geopolitics. For Pakistan, tensions with India have simmered for decades, and pose a pivotal question regarding how to engage with its eastern neighbour.

Modi is riding a wave of popularity, thanks mainly to an effective foreign policy and impressive economic growth and development. However, much of this success is also owed to favourable geopolitics since the dawn of this century. After 9/11, India projected itself to the West as a fellow victim of terrorism. The bonhomie with the West found reinforcement when the US decided to pivot its focus towards Asia, choosing India as the preferred partner in its strategic competition with China. Thus, India started receiving substantial US investments to bolster its military and economic prowess. Meanwhile, the Indian economy has registered high growth rates since 1991, positioning the country to become the world's fifth largest economy.

Hence, in the second Modi term, an emboldened regime aggressively pursued a twin-goal agenda: the internal creation of a Hindu state, and the external assertion of its presence. But this ambitious plan is not cost-free. The goal of creating a Hindu nationalist state is driving India farther away from its secular and pluralistic moorings. Accordingly, the space for minorities is shrinking fast. With a sizable Muslim population of 14.5 per

cent, and over 20pc of the population belonging to Scheduled Caste communities — including the Dalits who are grossly discriminated against — tomorrow's India might be headed for potentially massive internal commotion. Adding to its domestic pressures are the concerns of five southern states, which feel that their share of revenue is being appropriated by northern India. The farmers have also been restive for years.

Externally, India, despite being a strategic US partner, maintains substantive ties with Russia and economic engagement with China, citing its policy of strategic autonomy. It is also making a gradual shift from continental to maritime space, building up its naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and aspiring to become a 'net security provider' in the region.

As for Pakistan, India has cut off all links with it for the past eight years. Since independence, it has been an electoral issue in India. The leading political parties, particularly the BJP, demonise Pakistan to lure the votes of the Hindu majority. The underlying argument has always been that the creation of Pakistan was tantamount to the vivisection of Bharat Mata (Mother India) and must be undone to recreate Akhand Bharat (united India). This time, the mantra is that Pakistan must stop alleged cross-border terrorism. But, the reality is that today's India is not under any terrorist threat that could be attributed to Pakistan. In fact, it is Pakistan which is under threat of cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan and India. Recent discoveries indicate that Indian intelligence has been systematically targeting opponents in Pakistan (as it has in Canada

and the US). In January, Pakistan announced that Indian state operatives had sponsored the killing of two Pakistanis in Sialkot and Rawalakot in 2023, for which full evidence was available, and that there were 20 such cases under investigation. A recent story in The Guardian confirmed Pakistan's claim.

Apropos illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir, the Modi government has displayed a heavy-handed approach. In August 2019, India decided to abrogate the statehood of Kashmir and initiated demographic engineering to enable non-Kashmiri subjects to settle there. While Pakistan has consistently defended Kashmir's right to self-determination, the international community has not exercised any pressure on India, as pragmatism trumps principles. Most countries want to engage with India for economic cooperation and tend to overlook its excesses in occupied Kashmir.

Under the circumstances, suggestions have been made, including by this writer, that while maintaining our formal position, Pakistan should merge Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir as provisional provinces, subject to a final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. As it is, the people of GB have long sought full merger with Pakistan. Of late, there has been discussion on re-opening direct trade with India to benefit consumers and traders of both countries. Since it takes two to tango, the government here is advised not to announce any initiative unless it receives clear signals of reciprocity from India. Until the on-going Indian polls are over, and a new government is formed, 'wait and see' is the only option available to Pakistan. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

PM, IDB President agree to expedite completion work on different projects

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser on Sunday agreed for early completion of different IDB's development projects in Pakistan.

The prime minister thanked the IDB for its \$1 billion worth investment on different uplift projects in Pakistan during his previous tenure in office.

The president of IDB called on the prime minister on the sidelines of the special meeting of World Economic Forum

(WEF), PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar, Minister for Finance and Revenues Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Minister for Power Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari.

During the meeting, progress on different projects in Pakistan was reviewed and the both

sides discussed ways to explore further avenues for cooperation.

The prime minister also lauded the IDB's assistance in the rehabilitation of flood affected people and commended the personal cooperation and leadership role of Dr Al Jasser.

He observed that IDB's beneficial partnership with Pakistan was not only providing job opportunities and assisting in reconstruction efforts but also supporting the government's endeavours for achievement of objectives of sustainable progress.



MULTAN: Farmers are busy making bundles after harvesting wheat crop in their field for drying.

Renewables launches first batch of MSEC graduates to fill knowledge gap in Energy sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renewables First, an independent think tank working on Energy and Climate Change intersecting perspectives, has launched the first batch of its flagship Margalla School on Energy and Climate (MSEC) graduates being trained on emerging trends and knowledge concepts due to adverse impacts of climate change demanding out of the box solutions to discover and resolve interconnected issues leading less environment hazardous energy production and consumption technologies.

The MSEC of Renewables First held a

graduation cum networking ceremony here Sunday for the cohort members to celebrate their endeavour and start a circle of enlightened minds intended to illumine others in different sectors linked to energy and climate change to enhance climate resilience of energy sector. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Renewables First, Zeeshan Ashfaq said the world energy transition was a move being experienced globally driving the use of renewable energy which was intended to reduce reliance on fossil fuels causing global warming.

China's E-commerce logistics index rises in March

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): China's e-commerce logistics index, an indicator of logistics operations in the e-commerce sector, stood at 112.5 points in March, up 1.1 points from a month earlier, industry data showed.

Specifically, the sub-index tracking total business volume in the sector went up 4.2 points month on month to 126.4 points, hitting a new high over the past two years, according to the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

The figure tracking business volume in rural areas also rose 3.4 points from the previous month to 127.7 points during the period.

As the weather warmed up and the Chinese New Year holiday ended in February, China's e-commerce logistics market logged steady expansion, said the federation.



RIYADH: President of Islamic Development Bank Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

President PEW says: Economic reforms useless without political reforms

LAHORE (INP): President Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), Dr. Murtaza Mughal has said that economic reforms are useless without practical political reforms.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that economic reforms will only achieve goals when political reforms were introduced, otherwise, it would be nothing than wasting time and resources.

Murtaza Mughal said that economic reforms were

being carried out under the pressure of the IMF, but the elite were spared and all burden was being placed on the poor.

More attention should be paid to political reforms, otherwise process of economic reforms will remain incomplete and ineffective, he added.

The business leader said that a person who used to work at a roadside tea stall has become prime minister of India and has been changing the destiny of his country.

Customs team lauded for seizing mis-declared containers

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has appreciated the Chief Collector Customs Appraisement (Central Punjab) Muhammad Sadiq on launching a successful crackdown on smugglers leading to seizure of seven imported containers from the UAE at Thokar Niaz Baig Dry Port.

In a media statement issued here Sunday, he mentioned

that the Chief Collector had assigned a special task to Ms Zahra Haider, Collector Appraisement (West), to check the documents of all containers which after thorough inspection by a dedicated team of officers found guilty of misdeclaration of scrap tyres as all containers were fully loaded with electronics, smart cells, laptops, filters, garments, artificial jewellery, tyres and other luxury items worth billions of rupees.

NPO to organize workshop

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a workshop on "mastering talent acquisition: strategies for success" on Tuesday (April 30).

Talent acquisition refers to the process of identifying and acquiring skilled workers to meet your organizational needs and its team is responsible for identifying, acquiring, assessing, and hiring candidates to fill open positions within a company.

Cotton sowing target set on 7,53,000 acres land for DGKhan

DG KHAN (APP): The cotton cultivation target set on 7,53,000 acres land across the division for which orders have been issued to provide better facilities to the farmers.

The people involved in adulteration in seed, fertilizers and pesticides will be punished. The decision was taken in the Cotton Crop Management Monitoring Committee meeting at the Commissioner's office, Dera Ghazi Khan, chaired by the Additional Commissioner Coordination Karim Buksh representing the Commissioner.

President RCCI says: Promotion of gems sectors vital to increase exports

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saqib Rafiq said that there were immense opportunities in the nonconventional market sectors like gemstones and jewelry in the country which could play a vital role in enhancing foreign exchange.

He remarked that industry had huge potential for value addition and profitability which needed special attention of the relevant stakeholders.

The gems and jewelry sector can play a vital role in enhancing exports of the country, contributing immensely in earning of foreign exchange and providing employment to the youth, he said.

He said this while speaking to the participants of the International Workshop for Technical Expert Service programme on Gems and Jewelry at Chamber House here on Sunday.

Saqib noted that due to lack of interest by the marketers and traders, gems' industry was far below than the regional competitors.

Experts propose policy reforms for economic revival

ISLAMABAD (APP): Amidst economic challenges, top businessmen in the country and economic experts on Sunday proposed actionable measures aimed at stimulating economic activity and fostering investment.

In a live broadcast on a private news channel, Chairman of Arif Habib Group, Arif Habib, said that a super tax was imposed on the people who were already paying the taxes. He suggested that the prime minister cut down the super tax by half. Habib said Pakistan has the highest energy

costs, interest rates and tax rates in the entire region. "Who will invest in such a situation?" he questioned.

Meanwhile, Arif Habib suggested that there shouldn't be a wealth tax in Pakistan or the people would move abroad.

He said that taxes cannot be collected by increasing the tax rate. Instead, economic activity will have to be increased, he added. On the occasion, economist Syed Ali Hasnain said that discussing regarding imposing taxes wasn't new and added that taxation was the most regressive in Pakistan.



KARACHI: Citizens shopping at Bachat Bazaar in Ramsawami area of Provincial Capital.

Governor Punjab Balighur Rehman:

Good work of welfare orgs serving humanity should be acknowledged

Independent Report
LAHORE: The delegation of Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation met Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman, today at Governor House Lahore. The delegation comprised Chairperson Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Cecilia Lazaro, founder and Executive Director of Akhuwat Foundation,

Akhuwat Foundation, Abubakar Siddique and others. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that good work of welfare organizations which are serving the humanity should be acknowledged as it motivates other people too. Governor Punjab said that those who dedicate their lives

for humanity are great. Governor Punjab while appreciating the welfare services of Amjad Saqib, head of Akhuwat Foundation, said that conferment of Ramon Magsaysay Award on him is honour for the country. He said that in Pakistan, Akhuwat, Edhi, Indus Foundation and other organizations like them are playing an important role alongside

the government in poverty alleviation and social development. Governor Punjab said that people to people contact is very important in the relations between the two countries. He said that many foreign delegations meet him and tell him that got a different perception about Pakistan from media before visiting, but they found it otherwise.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with the delegation of Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation at Governor House.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Gulam Ali meeting with people and shopkeepers during his visit to interior city Peshawar.

PTI-led KP govt not to compromise merit and rule of law. Zahid

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzab, Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, paid a surprise visit to Police Lines Manshera in his personal car without protocol wherein he went round the camp of youth coming for the ongoing new recruitments in the police force under the management of Education and Testing Evaluation Agency (ETE). He on the spot witnessed the physical test procedure and examined various stages of the new police recruitment.

some flaws relating to the police joining test, recruitment and security arrangements. He asked DPO to visit the camp for his personal supervision. He emphasized on the need to remove the bottlenecks to make all recruitment processes more transparent and further improve security arrangements there. He underlined the need to ensure that the test is based purely on merit as he said the present KP govt will ever never compromise the rule of law and merit so that the talent of our educated and talented youth is not wasted and instead merit and transparency is ensured at every cost in the recruitment and appointment process including the physical test for the Jawans joining the KP police.

Four Hindko language books awarded

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (Online): Four Hindko language books published by the Gandhara Hindko Academy, Peshawar, have been awarded by the Pakistan Writers Guild Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The decision was announced as the committee of experts constituted by the literary organization declared the best books of Urdu, Pashto and Hindko published in the year 2022. The four publications awarded included "Ghazalaan Nazmaan Terey Naam", a book of poetry by Ahmad Nadeem Awan; "Dukh Chhupawaan Kirsaa", a poetic collection by Muhammad Nawaz Sabir; "Chunni Naal Bandhi Kahaniyaan", short stories by woman writer Gul Arbab and "Matti Naal Matti" a novel by Nazeer Bhatti. It is worth mentioning here that the Abaseen Arts Council awarded four Hindko language books published.

Minister thanks Islamic Aid over financial support for children treatment

Independent Report
LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has expressed his gratitude to the Islamic Aid for financially supporting treatment of patients at Children's Hospital.

He was talking to Mahmoodul Hasan, head of Islamic Aid, at the University of Child Health Sciences, here on Sunday. The minister said that in the eyes of Allah, there is no greater passion than serving humanity. He said that public private partnership creates convenience for people. May Allah accept the services of Islamic Aid for the suffering humanity, he prayed. Matters of mutual interest were discussed between the both sides. UHS Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Masood Saqib, Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Junaid Rasheed, Professor Dr. Nabila Talhat and Dr. Nasir Rana were present.

Hidayat Ullah elected as President HCBA Dera

Independent Report
DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Hidayat Ullah Malana has won the slot of President in High Court Bar Association (HCBA) Dera elections 2024-25. According to unofficial results, Sardar Hashmat ur Rehman and Sardar Zaizar Khan Miankhel group won the HCBA elections-2024-25 with huge margin and their presidential candidate Hidayat Ullah Malana won the slot for the fourth consecutive term.

CM KP expresses grief over loss of precious life in rain-related incidents

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur has expressed his heartfelt grief and sorrow over the death of five people in a rain related incident here on Sunday. In message, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the bereaved families.

for the speedy recovery of those injured in these accidents. The Chief Minister has also announced financial assistance to the affected families and directed the concerned authorities to take necessary action in this regard. Timely relief should be ensured to the affected families, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur said. He said, best medical care should be provided to the injured.

PIDE hosts talks on "Sustainable Fiscal Reforms"

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (Online): The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) hosted a public lecture on "Sustainable Fiscal Reforms: International Experience and Applications for Pakistan," featuring Arturo Herrera Gutierrez, Global Director for Governance at the World Bank, as the keynote speaker. At the core of his presentation, Arturo Herrera Gutierrez emphasized the urgent need for sustainable fiscal reforms in Pakistan. Drawing from international experiences, he highlighted the criticality of establishing a stable and sustainable debt path as a cornerstone for Pakistan's economic future.

ensuring fiscal sustainability requires a comprehensive long-term strategy, not just balancing budgets annually. These measures are critical for building credibility and securing access to financial markets. The World Banker emphasized the need to maintain consistency over time to avoid the economic problems of the past. He brought to the attention the resurgence of debt distress globally, particularly post-COVID-19, necessitating a re-evaluation of fiscal sustainability approaches. His presentation mentioned countries with gross public debt issues; notably, countries like the US, Canada, Japan, and Pakistan, which have debt-

to-GDP ratios exceeding 75%. Japan, with a debt ratio of 252% of GDP and a low interest rate of 0.88%, contrasts sharply with Greece, which faces a higher interest rate of 3.55% despite a lower debt ratio of 168%. This indicates that the debt-to-GDP ratio is significant, but the sustainability of fiscal finances also sends a critical signal to the market, impacting interest rates. During the lecture, Gutierrez imparted critical insights on sustainable fiscal policies across the globe, focusing specifically on how these strategies can be adapted to Pakistan's economic context. In contrast, the PIDE team proposed a nuanced

perspective, asserting that Pakistan's economic woes transcend simple accounting measures. They advocate for comprehensive healing rather than superficial fixes. Placing growth at the center of its reform agenda, PIDE emphasizes prioritizing economic expansion over mere revenue accumulation. They advocate for allowing the economy to flourish before imposing additional taxes, suggesting a re-regulation to facilitate transactions and stimulate economic activity, ultimately leading to improved revenue generation by default. PIDE also emphasized that the crux of the issue lies more in expenditure.

International News

Biden takes Trump to task at White House correspondents' dinner as Gaza protesters rally outside

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden poked fun at himself but took sharp aim at his election rival Donald Trump on Saturday at the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner, as protesters outside demonstrated against Israel's military offensive in Gaza. A long list of VIP guests, including journalists and celebrities from Chris Pine to Molly Ringwald, arrived in black-tie attire as more than 100 protesters confronted attendees in front of the Washington Hilton

hotel chanting "shame on you" and other slogans. Inside, the topic of Gaza was far from the lips of Biden and the evening's comedian, Colin Jost of "Saturday Night Live," who roasted Biden for his age and occasional stumble on the Airforce One stairs. "I would like to point out it's after 10:00pm, Sleepy Joe is still awake, while Donald Trump has spent the past week falling asleep in court every morning," Jost joked, referring to the former president's appearances at his New York hush money trial last week. Amid some self-mock-

ery and ribbing of the press, the 81-year-old president took sharp-elbowed jabs at his 77-year-old presumptive November election rival, quipping that "age is the only thing we have in common. My vice president actually endorsed me." Both Jost and Biden struck a more serious tone in addressing what many Americans feel is a politically fraught moment, with Biden telling attendees Trump's rhetoric was a danger particularly after the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, and that "the stakes couldn't be higher."



US President Joe Biden, US First Lady Jill Biden, host Colin Jost and Kelly O'Donnell attend the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner in Washington, US.

Russian missiles pound power plants in Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russian missiles pounded power facilities in central and western Ukraine on Saturday, increasing pressure on the ailing energy system as the country faces a shortage of air defences despite a breakthrough in US military aid. The airstrike, carried out with ballistic missiles and cruise missiles fired by Russian strategic bombers based in the Arctic Circle, was the fourth large-scale aerial assault targeting the power system since March 22. "The enemy again massively shelled Ukrainian energy facilities," said DTEK, Ukraine's largest private electricity company, adding that four of its six thermal power plants had suffered damage. Rescuers battled to

put out fires at several energy facilities in the western regions of Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk, which border Nato members Poland and Romania. After strikes on energy facilities in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, running water supplies were disrupted in President Volodymyr Zelensky's hometown of Kryvyi Rih, officials said. Ukrainian air defences brought down 21 of the 34 incoming missiles, the commander of the air force said in a statement. None of the facilities hit was identified by name, a security measure intended to prevent Russia quickly assessing the impact of its strikes. Russia denies targeting civilians, but says the Ukrainian energy system is a legitimate military target.



A Palestinian child salvages objects from the debris of a house destroyed by overnight Israeli bombardment in Rafah area of southern Gaza Strip.

Aid flotilla for Gaza blocked in Turkiye

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: A "Free-dom Flotilla" aimed at delivering aid to Gaza was blocked in Turkiye on Saturday after being denied use of two of its ships, which organisers blamed on Israeli pressure. A coalition of NGOs and other associations said it was unable to set sail after the West African country of Guinea-Bissau withdrew its flagged vessels.

20 Cambodian soldiers killed in ammunition base explosion

Monitoring Desk
PHNOM PENH: Twenty Cambodian soldiers were killed in an ammunition explosion at an army base on Saturday. The blast at the army base in Kampong Speu province, to the west of Phnom Penh, also wounded several soldiers, with the army saying that an entire truck of munitions had exploded. "I am deeply shocked to receive the news of the ammunition explosion incident," Prime Minister Hun Manet said in a statement

on Facebook, expressing his "deepest condolences" to the families of those killed. It was not immediately clear what had caused the explosion. Pictures on social media showed a destroyed one-storey building wreathed in smoke, with residents of a nearby village also sharing images online of broken windows. Other images showed what appeared to be civilians, including a child in diapers with cuts and gashes being treated in hospital.

Kyiv's top general says fighting in east Ukraine worsens, troops fall back

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Fighting in eastern Ukraine has worsened and Kyiv's troops have fallen back to new positions in at least three places along the front, Ukraine's top general said on Sunday. Russian troops have been steadily advancing in the east, with the focal point of fighting near the town of Chasiv Yar and northwest of Avdiivka, which Russian forces captured in February. Oleksandr Syrskyi said on Telegram that his troops had taken up new positions west of the villages of Berdychi and Semenivka, both north of Avdiivka.

hit was identified by name, a security measure intended to prevent Russia quickly assessing the impact of its strikes. Russia denies targeting civilians, but says the Ukrainian energy system is a legitimate military target.

China confronts Japanese politicians in disputed East China Sea area

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China's coast guard confronted Japanese lawmakers in waters claimed by both countries in the East China Sea, China's embassy in Tokyo and Japanese media said on Sunday, the latest in a series of maritime disputes involving China and its neighbours. Chinese vessels took unspecified law enforcement measures, the embassy said in a statement, adding that it had lodged solemn representations for what it called "infringement and provocation" by Japan near tiny, uninhabited islands that Beijing calls the

Diaoyu and Tokyo calls the Senkaku. The Japanese group, including former Defense Minister Tomomi Inada, was on an inspection mission organised by the city of Ishigaki in Okinawa prefecture, according to the Chinese embassy and Japanese public broadcaster NHK. Japan and China have repeatedly faced off around the Japan-administered islands. China also has escalating run-ins with the Philippine navy in disputed areas of the South China Sea, where Beijing's expansive maritime claims conflict with those of a number of Southeast Asia nations.

Thousands rally in Australian capitals to demand gender violence justice

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY: Violence against women is an "epidemic" in Australia, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Saturday, as thousands attended rallies in Sydney and other major Australian cities urging tougher laws on gendered violence. The rallies were spurred by a wave of violence against women that the government says has seen a woman killed every four days this year. The rallies also followed a mass stabbing in Sydney this month that killed six people, including five women.

UK ship sets sail for Gaza to help in building of aid jetty

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: A British ship to house hundreds of US troops building a jetty to boost aid deliveries to Gaza has set sail from Cyprus, a UK defence source said on Saturday. Royal Navy support ship Cardigan Bay will assist the international effort to construct the temporary floating pier, which is set to be completed early next month, the Pentagon said. The pier will initially facilitate the delivery of 90 truckloads of international aid a day into Gaza, rising

to up to 150 truckloads once fully operational, according to US estimates. The aid will be pre-screened in Cyprus and delivered directly to Gaza via the pier off the coast or via Ashdod port, which Israel has said it will open to aid vessels. "It is critical we establish more routes for vital humanitarian aid to reach the people of Gaza and the UK continues to take a leading role in the delivery of support," Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said.

Abbas says only US can halt Israel's attack on Rafah, expected in days

Monitoring Desk
RIYADH: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Sunday only the United States could stop Israel attacking the border city of Rafah in Gaza, adding that the assault, which he expects within days, could force much of the Palestinian population to flee the enclave. "We call on the United States of America to ask Israel to not carry on the Rafah attack. America is the only country able to prevent Israel from committing this crime," Abbas told a special meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Saudi capital Riyadh. Israel, which has threatened for weeks to launch an all-out assault on the neighbourhood saying its goal is to destroy Hamas' remaining battalions there, stepped up airstrikes on Rafah last week.

Western countries, including Israel's closest ally the United States, have pleaded with it to hold back from attacking the southern city, which abuts the Egyptian border and is sheltering more than a million Palestinians who fled Israel's seven-month long assault on much of the rest of Gaza. "What will happen in the coming few days is what Israel will do with attacking Rafah because all the Palestinians from Gaza are gathered there," Abbas said, adding that only a "small strike" on Rafah would force the Palestinian population to flee the Gaza Strip. "The biggest catastrophe in the Palestinian people's history would then happen." Abbas reiterated that he rejects the displacement of Palestinians into Jordan and Egypt and said he is concerned that once Israel completes its operations in Gaza.

Romina says: 1st Margalla Hills Half marathon best effort to champion climate awareness

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Sunday appreciated the civil society's spirit to promote running as a healthy leisure activity and termed the first-ever Margalla Hills Half Marathon held at the scenic Trail-5 of the National Park as a best effort to champion climate awareness.

Addressing the Margalla Hills Half Marathon which is the first and only trail running half marathon in the federal capital organised by the pioneer group of running, Islamabad "Run With Us" as chief guest, the Prime Minister's Coordinator extended her felicitations to the winning athletes and participants for actively participating in the adventurous endeavour and championing the climate awareness.

More than 150 participants from all across Pakistan including members of diplomatic community,

foreigners and experienced runners joined running on all the main trails of Margalla Hills covering an area of 21.1 kilometers, including the portion of Margalla Road from Trail 5 to Japanese Zoo parking and Pirsohawa Road from Talhar Mor to Monal Restaurant. Romina said the participants of the Half Marathon were the real celebrities of the event that deserve praise along with the organisers of the activity. She added that climate and sustainable development goals (SDGs) are her passion for spearheading the climate agenda at the policy level which is also the need of the hour.

The Minister on the occasion refused to take water in single-use plastic bottle as part of her flagship campaign and awareness drive to apprise masses to end one-time use plastics under the ban being imposed across the federal capital. "The nature and the planet is our mother and we turn to it for solace to get

rid of our vagaries of life and have to ensure its conservation. Say no to plastics and I am championing it, whereas media is our messenger and should carry forward this message as well," she said. She congratulated the marathon winners and participants and lauded their determination to walk for nature. "Everyone got their reward in the form of the best clean air and natural environment during the marathon," she added. Chairperson, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), Rina Saeed Khan thanked the media for supporting the cause of environmental conservation and mass awareness on responsible role towards nature.

Khan also lauded the Prime Minister's Coordinator for her warm support to the IWMB as a great supporter and advocate of the environment. "She (Romina) has a positive attitude and tremendous support towards IWMB and the Board will invite her on all its events," she added.



ISLAMABAD: PM'S coordinator on climate change & Environmental coordination Romina Khurshid Alam awarding medal to the winner in Margalla Hills Half Marathon, held at MHNK.

Saudi leadership declares PM Shehbaz "Man of Action" as he highlights Pak investment potential, policies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was declared the "Man of Action" by the Saudi leadership in recognition of his commitment to reviving Pakistan's economy through massive reforms and foreign investment. This acknowledgment came during his busy day in Riyadh, where he met different leaders and addressed a special meeting of the World Economic Forum. The remarks were made during separate meetings of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with Saudi Minister for Investment Khalid Al-Falih, Minister for Finance Mohammad Al Jadaan, and Minister for Industry Bandar bin Ibrahim Alkhourayef.

During his meeting with the prime minister on the margins of the Forum, Saudi Minister for Investment Khalid Al-Falih called him a "Man of Action," recognizing his performance and speed of work, along with his commitment to contributing to Pakistan's development and progress. This is the second time Shehbaz Sharif has earned such a distinction from foreign leadership as earlier, he was given the title of "Shehbaz Speed" by a Chinese leader to acknowledge his swift execution of development projects while serving as Punjab chief minister.

"We are all aware of your performance and speed of work," the Saudi minister said, adding that the prime minister was advancing the mission of progress in Pakistan, with their full support. "Your mission is our mission," he remarked.

Saudi minister for finance said that a delegation of Saudi investors would soon visit Pakistan. Pakistan was a priority for their investment and Saudi Arabia would continue to fully cooperate in the fields of agriculture, information technology and energy.

He lauded Pakistan's prominent role in the progress of Saudi Arabia in different fields.

During the meeting, it was agreed that Saudi Arabia would further explore opportunities of investment in Pakistan. He reaffirmed the support of Saudi Arabia in the economic progress of Pakistan and called the "progress of Pakistan the progress of Saudi Arabia".

He said that Saudi Arabia had made difficult decisions for reforms at the government level regarding its Vision 2030.

The prime minister also met the Saudi Minister for Industry who expressed keen interest in collaboration with Pakistan in agriculture, mining, information technology and other areas.

The Saudi minister said he was in contact with the Saudi private companies regarding investment in Pakistan and the representatives of these companies would soon visit Pakistan.

Talking to the Saudi ministers, the prime minister thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz for supporting Pakistan in a difficult time.

He said during the previous tenure of his government, the economic conditions of Pakistan improved due to the support and assistance of Saudi Arabia.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Shehbaz addressed a session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) regarding global health and termed the global inequity in the health sector as "the first and foremost problem" called upon bridging the widening gap between the Global South and the Global North.

He said that the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed the existing gaps largely between the Global North and Global South in terms of provision of health facilities and distribution of vaccines.

CM says committed to worker well-being

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has affirmed the government's commitment to health, welfare and safety of every worker in Punjab.

In her message on World Day for Safety and Health at Workplace, the CM said the purpose of celebrating Occupational Safety Day is to reaffirm our commitment to ensure a safe and healthy environment for workers at workplace.

The chief minister said that workers' safety comes first. "We would make sure they get home safely every day. The Punjab government has already started an occupational safety campaign in collaboration with the private institutions," she mentioned.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that awareness of workplace safety culture is essential in factories, offices, construction sites and farms, adding that accidents can be prevented through the implementation of the Safety Act and training.

The chief minister explained that labor laws are being amended, companies that do not care about the health and safety of employees will be fined.

IGP Islamabad directs traffic police officers to improve performance

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi met with the officers of Islamabad Traffic Police performing their duties in



fields, and directed to enhance traffic management and enforcement of traffic laws, a police spokesman said on Sunday. He said that on this occasion, the IGP Islamabad directed the officers not to issue tickets during peak hours in the city and ensure smooth traffic flow while providing citizens with all possible travel facilities.

He further said that while maintaining civility and good conduct, every possible assistance should be provided to citizens on the roads and all traffic officers must obtain permission from their respective DSPs before impounding any motorcycle or vehicle in a police station.

The citizens should be educated about traffic laws and road safety, speeding

DC inaugurates polio drive, 0.46 mln children to be administered polio drops

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Sunday initiated the anti-drive in the Federal Capital by giving polio drops to a child, marking the start of a week-long effort to reach over 460,000 children under five years old.

Talking to APP, DC said that the ICT administration has launched a large-scale campaign to vaccinate children against the crippling disease.

He said that the vaccination campaign would cover 80 union councils across the city, running from April 29 to May 5.

To meet this ambitious target, the campaign has enlisted 538 area supervisors, 2,146 mobile teams, 103 fixed teams, and 167 transit teams, he added.

DC said that these teams would work tirelessly to ensure every child was protected from this potentially devastating disease.

During the campaign, parents could bring their children to vaccination points set up at various educational institutions and public locations across the city. The effort aimed at making it easy for families to ensure their children receive the critical vaccine.

The Deputy Commissioner urged parents to take this opportunity to protect their children from the risk of polio, which could cause permanent disabilities.

He emphasized the importance of the vaccination and asked all residents to ensure their children receive the drops during the campaign.



ISLAMABAD: Counselor Embassy of the State of Palestine to Pakistan, Nader K. Alturk inaugurating a photo exhibition organized by Palestine Foundation Pakistan and Islamabad Arts Gallery, in solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people at Islamabad Arts Gallery F-9 Park in the Federal Capital.

Foreign tourists showing interest in Pakistan's cuisines

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani traditional cuisine plays a crucial role in promoting tourism, as both domestic and foreign tourists express a keen interest in consuming healthy foods.

Talking to APP here Sunday, the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) official said that along with the country's stunning landscapes such as high peaks, deserts, snow-clad valleys and beautiful scenery, Pakistani high-quality food attracted tourists from all over the world.

He emphasized the need to further market the cuisines through international tourism fairs aimed to introduce the country's foods to encourage foreign tourists to throng towards Pakistan besides showcasing its rich tourism potential. He said that Pakistani chefs are entertaining traditional food lovers by establishing hotels and restaurants worldwide, underscoring their contributions to the country's pride.

The official expressed happiness over the increasing number of women in the sector as it would create new employment opportunities for women. He further said that a woman has set up a food stall at Mohenjodaro not only to serve the tourists with dignity.



KARACHI: Peoples Party (PPP) Women Wing President, Faryal Talpur cutting her birthday cake along with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, PPP Chairman and Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, First Lady held at Bilawal House.

Climate change challenges Potohar farmers' livelihood

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the Potohar region, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and historic significance encompassing cities like Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Islamabad, agriculture relies solely on rainfall. However, farmers in this area face a formidable adversary: climate change. This silent foe poses a significant threat to their way of life, silently impacting their livelihoods.

In a region, spanned over 28448.9 sq km famed for cultivating staples like wheat, maize, pearl millet, gram, barley, and groundnuts, the impact of climate change is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. Nowhere is this more evident than in the dry Barani region nestled within the heart of Potohar. Here, water scarcity and erratic weather patterns, exacerbated by climate change, have become grim realities faced by farmers and the entire population on a daily basis.

Naseer Memon, a renowned expert on climate change and natural disasters, emphasized the critical link between weather patterns and agricultural outcomes. He pointed out that the delayed snowfall this year could lead to a thin layer of snow, which might swiftly melt as temperatures rise. Additionally, April witnessed an unusually wet spell, causing significant damage to ripe wheat crops in Punjab. Memon warned that if climate change leads to heavy monsoon showers and subsequent floods, it could wreak havoc on crops, as was witnessed in 2022 when Pakistan incurred substantial losses in the agriculture sector due to abnormal rains, particularly in Sindh. Moreover, the intrusion of cold weather into the summer months could adversely affect the production of mangoes and dates. Highlighting the economic ramifications, Memon underscored Pakistan's heavy reliance on agriculture, which forms the backbone of its economy. Any adverse impact on agricultural production due to climate change would directly affect markets.

PTDC plans to organize 2-day tourism expo

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) in partnership with World Bank Group has planned to organize two-day Pakistan Tourism Symposium and Expo here from May 27 to 28. Talking to APP, the PTDC official said that the Tourism Symposium would be a two-day event focused on the theme of Building National Economy through tourism. He further said that a tourism Expo would also be organized to showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential and create G2G, B2B and G2B linkages among the industry stakeholders. He said that PTDC intended to bring together more than 400 national and international tourism professionals, industry experts, and decision-makers to share their ideas.

PFA committed to ensure food safety: DG

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director-General of the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Muhammad Asim Javed on Sunday said that teams of the authority are actively working seven days a week to ensure food safety standards across the province. Talking to a private news channel, he said that 150 teams of the PFA were diligently covering all Tehsils and districts across the entire province.

These teams were responsible for inspecting all food items, and any defective products were dealt with according to the Authority Act, he added.

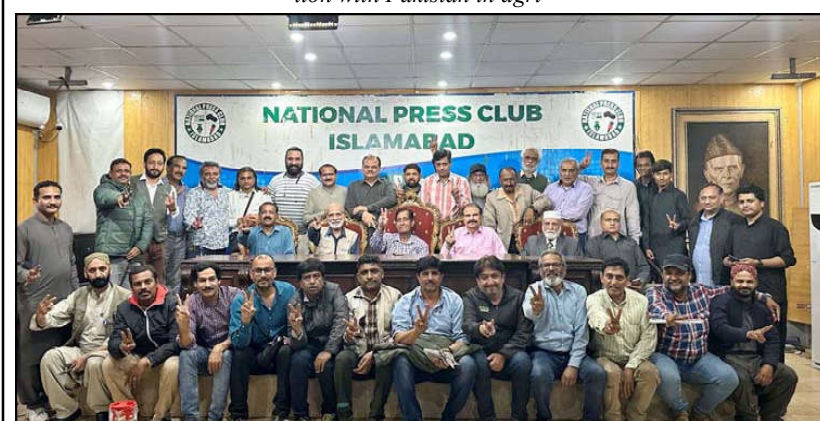
He said that operational teams are conducting routine inspections as well as responding to the registered complaints.

Only for Lahore, there were 18 food safety teams, leading to a 90% increase in inspections compared to the previous year, resulting in fines being imposed on violators, he said.

Due to these efforts, the monthly average fine across the province has increased from 50 million to 90 million, leading to a noticeable decline in the sale of defective items.

To further address this issue, the PFA is conducting awareness campaigns throughout the province, engaging opinion leaders, social and electronic media, and religious figures, he said.

Moreover, he said that training sessions were being organized at various food establishments, including hotels and restaurants, to ensure strict adherence to hygiene standards.



ISLAMABAD: A group photograph of newly elected office bearers of Rawalpindi Islamabad Photo Journalist Association 2024-25 at National Press Club.

Envoy Masood calls for recognition of Palestinians' right to self-determination

WASHINGTON (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan has underlined the urgent need for a ceasefire in Palestine, calling for immediate humanitarian assistance and the recognition of Palestinians' right to self-determination.

He expressed these remarks while addressing the Spring meeting of the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA) in the U.S. state of Illinois.

In a passionate speech to over 570 attendees, Ambassador Masood Khan underscored the invaluable contributions of the Pakistani diaspora, particularly physicians, in the United States. He commended the APPNA for its relentless dedication to both medical excellence and community service, which has illuminated the positive essence of Pakistan and its people.

The Ambassador expressed gratitude to President Asif Mohiuddin and Chair Sajid Mehmood for the opportunity to address the esteemed gathering.

The Ambassador outlined the burgeoning bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and the United States in healthcare. He disclosed pivotal decisions made during recent high-level health dialogues, including the proposal to establish a Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) branch in Pakistan for enhanced disease surveillance.

Emphasizing the substantial investments made by Pakistani-American doctors in various sectors of healthcare, Masood Khan urged for expanded investment in Pakistan, citing promising prospects in telemedicine, pharmaceuticals, and IT. He highlighted Pakistan's burgeoning IT industry, boasting 192 million mobile phone users and 135 million broadband subscribers, which has positioned the country as a cost-effective destination for IT investments. Encouraging confidence in Pakistan as a favorable investment destination, Ambassador Khan reiterated the enduring bond between the Pakistani diaspora and the United States, describing it as a resilient asset for both nations.

IFL scheme continues to serve underprivileged families

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

The scheme is a flagship initiative of the government designed and implemented by the PPAF and is strategically aimed at promoting financial inclusion as a means of reducing poverty by providing interest-free loans to impoverished households in more than 100 districts across Pakistan.

These loans serve to empower poor households to initiate income-generating enterprises, thereby fostering economic self-sufficiency and improving their overall quality of life.

IFL beneficiary, Ameeran Bibi who lives in Gharibabad, Piplan, Mianwali said, "My grandfather used to make pottery so was my father and now I make pottery at my home however we didn't have enough finances to sustain this business".

"My husband is suffering from serious health issues and my son helps his father arrange pottery in the shop before going to school and take care of the business after school, allowing my father to rest", she said.

"One day I came to know about interest-free micro loans and after discussing with my husband, I applied and availed the facility. We started our business through purchasing all the raw material", Ameeran Bibi said while talking to this news agency.

"Now I am able to run my household expenditure in a better way and also paid back the first loan and applied for the second loan of Rs.45,000. Through this, we improved our business further."



ISLAMABAD: A group photo of participants of Face Congress Pakistan 2024 with Dr Wolfgang REDKASWOBODA, an aesthetic surgeon, at Convention Center in the Federal Capital.