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dailyindkhi@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari assured Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong on Thursday that Pakistan would take necessary measures to ensure the security of Chinese nationals working on projects in the country.

The meeting between the two comes a week after five Chinese engineers — and their Pakistani driver — were killed in a suicide bombing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bisham while travelling between Islamabad and a hydroelectric dam construction site in Dasu. The bus was attacked in the Bisham city

of KP's Shangla district. The attack prompted China to demand a thorough probe into the deadly blast and security for its citizens. In response, Islamabad had announced a swift probe to hold the "perpetrators and accomplices" accountable. Chinese investigators had also arrived to join the probe.

In response to the Chinese government's demand to promptly investigate the incident and act against those involved, the government had also decided to form a joint investigation team to probe the attack.

A statement issued by the presidency today said Ambassador Zaidong called on President Zardari at the Aiwan-i-Sadr.

"The meeting discussed matters of mutual interest, besides underscoring the need to increase counter-terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing to overcome the menace of terrorism.

"The president assured the ambassador that Pakistan would take all necessary measures to ensure the security of our Chinese brothers, who are working on different projects in Pakistan," it added.



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

New IMF programme crucial for economic stability: PM

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

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

He said the finance minister was going to Washington this month with a

delegation to participate in the IMF spring meetings where he will also discuss details of the new programme with the IMF.

He said although the terms of the new deal would not be so easy, but the government will shift the burden of the tough conditions from the less privileged to the wealthier.

The prime minister hoped that after the IMF board meeting, the last tranche of existing standby agreement worth \$1.1 billion will be disbursed to Pakistan this month. With regard to PIA's divestment, he said the privatization process of Pakistan Airlines was on track and the schedule set for the process would be fully imple-

mented. He said that for the outsourcing of the airports, a Turkish company was arriving Islamabad on April 6 which would negotiate the outsourcing process with the Pakistani authorities. About digitization of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister informed that the consultants for the digitization process would be appointed by end of the current month. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said, he recently chaired a meeting of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in which details of various sectors including finance, investment, exports, Information Technology, agriculture, power and petroleum were discussed.



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

Tarar urges political parties not to politicize national economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday urged opposition and other political parties not to politicize national economy stabilized due to consistent efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Addressing a news conference, the minister recalled the initiatives taken by PM Shehbaz Sharif led government during its previous tenure of 16 months.

He was flanked by Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshed Alam. The minister gave credit to PM Shehbaz Sharif for successful negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that resulted into a standby agreement with the fund in the recent past.

He said such initiatives had ultimately stabilized rupee against dollar and brought an improvement in the exchange rate subsequently.

PM pays tribute to Shaheed ZAB on his 45th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday paying tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on his 45th death anniversary, said he played a very important role in promoting democracy and democratic traditions in Pakistan.

"Due to the efforts of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan got the 1973 constitution which was agreed upon by all political parties," the prime minister said in a statement.

He emphasized that the Supreme Court, in its latest ruling, affirmed the true extent of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's political aspirations.

ZA Bhutto should be declared as a political martyr: Nasir Shah

KARACHI (APP): Provincial Minister for Energy, Planning and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Thursday said that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a great leader and 1971 constitution was his gift to the country. In a message on Shaheed Bhutto's 45th death anniversary, Shah said entire nation always remember him as a great leader of the people.

He demanded to amend the laws by declaring Bhutto as a political martyr which is the need of the hour.

Hafiz Naem elected new JI Emir

LAHORE (INP): Hafiz Naemur Rehman was elected as new emir of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) by getting majority votes on Thursday.

Three names were presented by the Central Shura members to lead the Jamaat. Sirajul Haq, Liaquat Baloch and Hafiz Naemur Rehman were among the contestants. The decision was taken by the majority of Jamaat-e-Islami members. Hafiz Naemur Rehman will lead the Jamaat till 2029.

Siraj-ul-Haq was elected JI Chief in 2014, he held this position for 10 years. Syed Munawar Hasan, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Mian Tufail Muhammad, and Maulana Syed Abul A'la Maududi held this position earlier. The Jamaat was founded by the late Maududi in 1941.



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

CM Sindh pays tribute to Shaheed Z.A. Bhutto on his death anniversary

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a great leader of the world and his judicial murder was black day of our history.

According to statement issued from the CM House, Syed Murad Ali Shah said the 45th death anniversary of PPP founder is being observed across the country today to pay tribute to our great leader.

He said Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had played unprecedented role for the service of the people as well as the Muslim Ummah.

Quaid e Awam had awakened political consciousness among the masses, Murad Ali Shah said and added that he also

struggled for well being of the people and the country's development and prosperity.

The CM said on a reference filed by president Asif Ali Zardari, the honorable Supreme Court also recognized the fact that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was innocent and his sentence was illegal.

He said PPP will carry forward the mission of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his brave daughter Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto who laid down their lives for the cause of the democracy.

Murad Ali Shah said under the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Pakistan People's Party always follow Bhuttoism and continue to serve people of the country.

ZAB murder was dark chapter of the history: Khuhro

LARKANA (APP): Sindh People's Party President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro has paid tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, founder of People's Party on his 45th death anniversary on Thursday.

He expressed his views on the statement saying that the judicial killing of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a very dark chapter in history.

He said that after the decision that Shaheed Bhutto did not get a transparent trial, we demand from the federal government that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto should be officially declared a national democratic hero and martyr.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$13.379 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$13,378.9 million while foreign reserves held by State Bank reach \$8,040.4 million in the week ended on March 29, 2024. The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank increased by \$19 million to \$8,040.4 million during the week under review.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$5,338.5 million, it added.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on March 22, 2024, were \$13,427.6 million.

Bilawal visits mausoleum of martyrs at Garhi Khuda Bux Bhutto

LARKANA (APP): Chairman, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday visited the Mausoleum of the martyrs of Bhutto's family in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh in connection with the 45th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

He was accompanied by the central president of PPP (Women Wing) Ms. Faryal Talpur and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

They visited the grave of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, laid a floral wreath at the grave, and offered Fateha.

They also visited the graves of late Begum Nusrat Bhutto, late Shireen Amir Begum, Shaheed Mir Murtaza Bhutto, and Shaheed Mir Shahnawaz Bhutto and offered fateha at the grave and laid floral

wreaths.

President PPP Sindh Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Ijaz Ahmed Jakhriani, Sindh Ministers Nasir Ali Shah, Syed Zulfikar Shah, Gul Muhammad Jakhriani, Khurshid Junejo, MPA Sohail Anwar Siyal, MPA Jameel Ahmed Soomro, Arsalan Sheikh, Dr. Lalchand Wadigar were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari paid glowing tribute to the former prime minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and said that he rendered exemplary services on the political and social landscape of the country.

Besides, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah also paid rich tributes to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for his services in strengthening democracy in the country.

They also visited the graves of late Begum Nusrat Bhutto, late Shireen Amir Begum, Shaheed Mir Murtaza Bhutto, and Shaheed Mir Shahnawaz Bhutto and offered fateha at the grave and laid floral



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

Pakistan would not hold talks with TTP: Foreign Office

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

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan has ruled out talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Responding to the queries of media persons at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad Thursday regarding the suggestion made by an Afghan Minister for talks between Pakistan and TTP, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan expects the Afghan authorities to take urgent action against the terrorist outfits and their leadership for the crimes they are committing and terrorist incidents they are responsible for in Pakistan.

She said that following the security audit and enhancement of security measures, the Chinese projects in Pakistan are functional.

The spokesperson vehemently condemned the terrorist attack in Iran. Expressing solidarity with the Iranian people, she said Pakistan would like to work with Iran to find joint solutions to terrorism.

When asked about the Palestinians' fresh bid for the UN membership, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan recognizes the state of Palestine and will support any such move at the UN.

Condemning the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza, she called for international accountability of Israel for its crimes against humanity.

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

US vows to expand security partnership with Pakistan

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States has vowed to expand the security partnership between Washington and Pakistan.

Addressing the press briefing, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that security partnership with Pakistan has been their top priority and will continue to do so. Miller stated that the US wants to see everyone in Pakistan treated according to the law, we support the rule of the constitution everywhere in the world, and we will continue to monitor all aid programs.

The spokesperson continued to say regarding India that they want a complete investigation of the

murder of the Sikh leader from New Delhi and has also urged India to complete the investigation of the murder of the Sikh leader as soon as possible.

The State Department spokesperson said "We also require robust monitoring, reporting from partner organizations implementing the assistance programmes including those in unstable and unfriendly environments." Earlier, United States (US) President Joe Biden, in his first letter to Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif, reiterated the US' unwavering commitment to standing alongside Pakistan in confronting the pressing challenges facing the world and the region.



KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Local Bodies Saeed Ghani, PPP Sindh Secretary Waqar Mehdi and others offering Dua on the occasion of 45th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at People's Secretariat.



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

Death anniversary of former PM ZA Bhutto observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 45th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was observed on Thursday.

According to focal Person of Bilawal House, due to Ramadan Sharif public gathering will be held on the 14th of this month at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto which will be addressed by Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and other party leaders.

Meanwhile, the collective Fateha Khwani ceremony will be offered after

Ifar and elected MNA and MPAs of Larkana Division will participate.

Sindh government has announced a public holiday on the occasion. Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has paid glowing tribute to former Prime Minister and founder of Pakistan Peoples' Party Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

In his message on the occasion, he said Shaheed Bhutto rendered exemplary services on the political and social landscape of the country.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Pessimistic view

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

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

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

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

We were warned

F.S.Aijazuddin

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

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

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

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

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

In Bangladesh, the backlog is 4.2m cases,

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

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

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

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

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

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

solvency is underwritten by lucrative commercial advertising.

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

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

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

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

Prisoner welfare

Rida Tahir

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

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

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

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

Although signifi-

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

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

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

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

Pakistan was ranked 130th out of 142

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

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

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

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

Commerce News

PM seeks comprehensive plan for increase in revenue



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Comprehensive measures in progress to enhance tax net: FBR

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

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

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

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



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

Rupee sheds 01 paise against dollar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tanveer vows to address confronted challenges in agriculture sector

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

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

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

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

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

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

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

CM KP hold meeting on irrigation, introducing modern irrigation system

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

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

Making the province self-sufficient in agricultural commodities is

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

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

He said that steps

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Minister urges politicians to prioritise national interests over conspiracy politics

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

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

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

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

Jinnah House attack: ATC grants bail to 39 accused

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

Health Minister meets Deputy Director Bill Gates Foundation for polio

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

Special Secretary Health for Polio Eradication, Abdul Basit was also present at the meeting. During the meeting, there was an exchange of views regarding potential upcoming visits

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

ZAB is still alive in hearts of people: Babar

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

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

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

Corrupt invigilators should be sent behind bars: Minister Bilal Yasin

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

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

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

Minister stresses cleaning of ponds to save underground water

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

The Punjab Municipal Development Fund Company (PMDFC), in collaboration with UNICEF, has successfully completed a model project for cleaning waste water ponds in

Sheikhupura. The plan to make sewage water reservoirs reusable will be extended in a phased manner.

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



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

International News

Nato marks 75th anniversary with warnings of renewed Russian threat

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kuleba said the Nato ministers had agreed to

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

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

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

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



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

Palestine revives bid to become UN member

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

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

In a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, dated Tuesday

and seen by AFP, UN envoy Riyad Mansour requested "upon instructions of the Palestinian leadership" that an application dating back to 2011 be re-considered.

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

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

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

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

Macron says he has no doubt Russia will target Paris Olympics

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

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

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

The Games will take place amid a complex global backdrop, with Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's

military campaign in Gaza complicating efforts to safeguard the Olympics.

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

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

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



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

Italy arrests 22, seizes millions in EU fund fraud case

Monitoring Desk
MILAN: Italian police said on Thursday they had arrested 22 people and seized assets from villas to Rolex worth over 600 million euros (\$652 million) as part of an investigation into alleged fraud tied to European Union and Italian funding schemes.

Finance police in Venice said they believe the group, which operated in various European countries, sought to defraud the European Union's COVID pandemic recovery fund and generous home improvement schemes introduced by Italy.

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

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Israel boosts defences after Iran revenge threat

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

Hamas official says no progress in ceasefire talks

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

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

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

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

While Hamas wants any ceasefire agreement to secure an end to the Israeli military offen-

sive, Israel prefers a prisoners-for-hostage release deal, refusing to commit to ending its military campaign.

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

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

PM calls for immediate end to genocidal war against innocent Palestinians

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

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

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

He expressed deep condolences over the tragic

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

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

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

He assured the Palestinian Ambassador that Pakistan would continue to raise its voice at every international forum in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

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

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

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

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

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ISLAMABAD: Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division, Saeed Ashraf Siddiqi and Chief Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Pakistan, Mr. Naoaki MIYATA, are signing the Grant Agreement.

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

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

The Notes of the projects were signed and exchanged by Secretary of Economic Affairs Division (EAD) Dr. Kazim Niaz and Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan WADA Mitsuhiro on behalf of their respective governments at a ceremony held here. Whereas, the Grant Agreements were signed by EAD Joint Secretary Saeed Ashraf Siddiqi and Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Pakistan Naoaki MIYATA, a news release said.

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

These grant-in-aid projects are aimed to improve the Pakistan Meteorological Department's capabilities in meteorological observation, weather forecasting and dissemination of forecast/warnings besides strengthening medical services in the children hospital and MCH (Mother & Child Healthcare) center in Liaquat University Hospital, Hyderabad/Jamshoro, Sindh.

Faryal pays tribute to Shaheed Z.A. Bhutto

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central President of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Women Wing Faryal Talpur has paid tribute to the Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on his 45th martyrdom anniversary.

In her message on Thursday, she said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto made the people aware for their democratic rights and gave PPP an invincible platform to achieve and protect them.

She said Quaid Awam took steps to make the backward sections of the society, including the working people, women and minorities, politically and economically independent.

Sindh minister pays tribute to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Agriculture, Sports and Youth Affairs, Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Khan Mahar, Thursday, said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a visionary leader who introduced new trends in politics.

Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Mahar, in his message on the occasion of the 45th martyrdom anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, said that Quaid-e-Awam was a great leader of not only Pakistan but also of entire Islamic world.

Bhutto's politics was based on ideological principles and with his foresight and wisdom he had given unanimous constitution of 1973, he said and added that Bhutto steered the country on path of development and prosperity by establishing institutions like Steel Mills.

Member MQM-P PIB Town laid to eternal rest

KARACHI (APP): The funeral prayer of Muzaffar Hussain, a member of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan PIB Town, was performed at Gulzar Habib Masjid Doli Khata and the deceased was buried at Mewa Shah graveyard here on Thursday.

The members of the central ad-hoc committee Anees Ahmed Qaimkhani attended the funeral prayer of the deceased.

Members of Sindh Assembly Amir Siddiqui and Faisal Rafiq, town and UC officials and workers including the relatives and residents of the deceased attended funeral.

FIA, DRAP conduct raid, apprehend two individual with harmful drug

KARACHI (APP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan, on Thursday conducted raid and apprehended two individuals involved in manufacturing of harmful drug.

According to the spokesperson of FIA, two individuals associated with a dangerous network have been arrested allegedly involved in a harmful drug related trade. Additionally, machinery and equipment utilized in the production of illegal medicines were also seized. The operation was conducted in the Lines Area.

The suspects were found engaged in the manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of counterfeit drugs from a residential property. Over 82 varieties of counterfeit drugs used in the medicines were also recovered.

Pakistan desires to enhance energy, barter trade cooperation with Russia: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday said that Pakistan desired to enhance bilateral cooperation with Russia, particularly in the fields of energy and barter trade.

The president, in a meeting with Russian Ambassador Albert P. Khorev, who called on him here, emphasized that Russian banks should be persuaded to launch their operations in Pakistan to promote bilateral trade.

He also called for strengthening cultural linkages between Pakistan and Russia, particularly in the fields of TV and film industries.

President Zardari conveyed his message of felicitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin on his reelection and expressed good wishes for him.

He expressed the hope that under President Putin's leadership, Russia would achieve swift development besides promoting regional peace.

He also expressed condolence over the death of 130 people in a terrorist attack that took place on March 22 in Moscow.

Ambassador Albert Khorev told the president that Russia desired to play its part in the economic development and prosperity of Pakistan and that both countries were cooperating on mutual issues like anti-terrorism and drug trafficking.

The ambassador said that Russia desired to double the existing volume of bilateral trade with Pakistan.

He thanked President Zardari for expressing condolence over the deaths in the March 22 terrorist attack in the Russian capital. The envoy also felicitated President Zardari on assuming the office.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Jawad A.A. Rabei called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

DIG directs robust security arrangements for Jummat-ul-Wida, Youm-ul-Quds and Lailat-ul-Qadr

HYDERABAD (APP): The Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Hyderabad Tariq Razaq Dharejo, on the occasion of Jummat-ul-Wida, Youm-ul-Quds and Lailat-ul-Qadr, directed all SSPs of the Hyderabad range to ensure strict security arrangements in accordance with the current situation of the country and to arrange additional police deployment at important mosques, imambargahs and congregation halls in their respective districts. He also instructed to make robust arrangements for strict surveillance of all important areas and routes, both internal and external, and to deploy specialized teams for this purpose.

The DIG Hyderabad issued directives to not only enhance security at the police station level to deal with any untoward incidents and maintain peace and security but also to strengthen overall security measures including random snap checking, mobile and motorcycle patrols and advance intelligence collection, the police spokesman said on Thursday.

He emphasized the need to ensure the security of rallies related to Youm-ul-Quds by maintaining contact with the organizers and ensuring the security and timely start and end of these rallies. Additionally, establishment of consistent contacts were also directed with all religious scholars.

Unhygienic eateries fined by Sindh Food Authority

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Authority (SFA) team has taken strict action on poor sanitation conditions at famous eateries in operation before Sehri and imposed fine.

The action was taken under the supervision of Director General SFA Agha Fakhar Hussain, in the district East here, said a statement on Thursday.

The team of SFA imposed a fine of Rs 250,000 on Bab-e-Sweets while a fine amounting Rs 125,000 was imposed on the two branches of Red Apple.

The SFA team discarded the expired food items at Red Apple on the spot.

Meanwhile, the SFA team inspected the shops of chicken meat sellers and wasted the expired chicken meat on the spot. Improvement notices were also issued to several shops.

Talking on this occasion, the DG SFA said that no compromise would be made on the principles of hygiene and strict action would be taken against those who do not follow the SOPs of SFA.



GARHI KHUDA BUX: Leaders and activists of Peoples Party showering rose petals and offer Fataha at the grave of martyred Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Founder of Peoples Party (PPP), in connection of his 45th Death Anniversary ceremony held at Bhutto Mausoleum in Garhi Khuda Bux.

Farmers demands for procurement centers in Larkana range

LARKANA (APP): President of Sindh Abadgar Board District Larkana, Advocate Irfan Jatoi said that the wheat crop is ready at this time, but the Sindh government has not established wheat procurement centers in Larkana region. He talked with Media in press club larkana on Thursday.

He said that yet no any centers have been set up for purchase, while the Sindh government announced fix price of wheat 4 thousand rupees two months ago and from 20 March of last month established centers in every district of Sindh in this regard issued a notification for farmers and Abadgars. But unfortunately the announcement of the government could not be implemented till now. He said that the officials of the food department are in contact with unscrupulous traders, who do not want the farmers to do well, that is why they are taking advantage of the compulsion of the farmers of Sindh and are buying wheat at a price of 32 to 33 hundred rupees. Further, local traders can take the advantage of the food department and sell the same wheat at higher price.



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

Commissioner chairs meeting regarding supply of drinking water, shortage of water in downstream

HYDERABAD (APP): The Divisional Commissioner Hyderabad Ahsan Qureshi presided over a meeting regarding supply of clean water and shortage of water downstream.

Commissioner directed relevant officers to take necessary action including cleanliness of water ponds to ensure provision of healthy clean water to masses.

On this occasion, Chief Engineer Kotri Barrage informed that flow of water downstream has been increased after which quality of water downstream was improving while flow from Sukkur Barrage had been increased which will reach downstream soon.

On this occasion water expert member water commission Supreme Court of Pakistan Dr. Ahsan Siddiqui directed WASA officers to ensure usage of chlorine and hypochlorite for supply of water. He asked people to not pay any attention to rumours circulating on social media about water and spreading panic.

He further informed that at present TDS level in Indus downstream was less dangerous than TDS level of many countries of the world, however we should have to take effective measures to make water healthier.

SBP announces Eid holidays from 10 to 12 April

KARACHI (APP): All the banks and financial institutions will remain closed from April 10 to 12, 2024 on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here, announced that the central bank will "remain closed from 10th to 12th April, 2024 (Wednesday to Friday) being public holidays on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr."

Subsequently, all the banks, Micro Finance Banks and other financial institutions will also observe Eid-ul-Fitr holidays from 10 to 12 April, 2024.

DC larkana visit disposal site for drinking water in Ratodero

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Larkana Dr. Sharjeel Noor Chana visited the disposal site located on Shikarpur Road in Ratodero Taluka on Thursday.

He was informed by the staff about the disposal machines and instructed them to ensure the cleanliness of Ratodero city and arrange purified drinking water for public. "I know about shortage of water here, we are working on it and soon you will have a purified drinking water available in the city", he added.

On this occasion, he gave further instructions to the officials and said that cleanliness of the city is our first priority so that the residents do not have any complaints.

PIA announces massive airfare reduction

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Thursday announced a significant reduction in airfares for Umrah pilgrims.

During the period from April 7 to 11, the national flag carrier announced a 30 percent reduction in airfares for passengers traveling to Jeddah, Madinah, Riyadh, and Dammam. Passengers undertaking the sacred pilgrimage of Umrah will also benefit from a notable reduction of up to 20 percent in fares. Meanwhile, the economy class has been reduced to Rs 50,000.

Karachi Bar asks NHA to waive toll tax for lawyers

KARACHI (INP): Karachi Bar Association (KBA) demanded the National Highway Authority (NHA) to exempt lawyers from toll tax, reported on Thursday.

According to the report, Karachi Bar has issued a letter to the chairman of the NHA and requested to issue a directive in this regard.

In the letter, the Karachi Bar Association said that all lawyers should be exempted from toll tax on the national highways and instructions should be issued to the staff of all toll plazas, especially Karachi and Hyderabad.

The Karachi Bar Association further said in the letter that toll tax should not be charged to lawyers on showing the card of the Bar Councils and Bar Associations.

The letter said that this decision of exempting lawyers should be taken in the larger interest of the lawyers' community because the toll tax staff often misbehaves with them.

Wheat product feared to be 3 mt short of estimated target this season: Jawad

KARACHI (INP): Vice President of Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Ahmad Jawad has said that Pakistan is likely to produce 29 million tons of wheat this season against a target of 32 million tons due to high input costs of wheat as opposed to the consumption of 33m tones excluding the requirement to feed Afghanistan.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, he said that prices of inputs stay at higher levels and in the current season, wheat production was likely to be three million tons lower than the target of 32 million tons. He said that farmers have been forced to buy urea at double the actual price as they paid over Rs5,000 per bag due to alleged cartelization.

Ahmad Jawad said that wheat and wheat based products account for 60-70% of all caloric intake in the country's population.



Federal Minister for Power, Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari meets ADB Country Director Yong Ye in Islamabad.

Real reforms never been attempted in any sector: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that no serious measures have been ever initiated for bringing reforms in different sectors.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, he said that the former governments have deceived international lenders and masses with lip service, but now it has become impossible to run the country by avoiding reforms.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the IMF has been duped continuously for decades, which has made its attitude very rigid. Now, the loan will be received after real reforms, and the country could be run.

The IMF's focus has been on reforming the FBR. Despite spending billions of rupees in the past, FBR could not be reformed to a satisfactory level, he added.

Realizing this situation, the political and military leadership have jointly taken various measures to expand the tax net, which was commendable. In this regard, bringing wholesalers and retailers into the tax net was the most difficult step, and it requires political commitment.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that all such efforts have failed in the past, but now there was no other option left. Over three million retailers must be brought into the tax net.



KARACHI: Vehicles badly stuck in traffic jam on Shabra e Pakistan, in the Provincial Capital.

PRL announces major expansion plans with OGRA Agreement

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL) is gearing up for a substantial growth spurt with the impending signing of an extension agreement with the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA). This agreement will act as a catalyst for a project that will not only double PRL's refining capacity but also position the company as an environmental leader.

The crux of the project lies in the significant upgrade and expansion of PRL's existing facilities. The agreement will pave the way for increased output, boosting PRL's refining capacity from 50,000 barrels per day to a staggering 100,000 barrels per day. This expansion will not just benefit PRL's production capabilities but also have a ripple effect on the nation's overall fuel security. Beyond the capacity increase, a key driver of this project is environmental compliance. By enabling PRL to produce Euro-5 standard fuel, the project represents a significant commitment to cleaner operations.



SUKKUR: Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Javed Jiskani along with others addresses to media persons during press conference held at his office in Sukkur.

Women peasant literacy centre inaugurated in Matiari

HYDERABAD (APP): Women participants at a seminar have demanded the Government to take interest in the welfare and protection of women peasants and workers, and devise a mechanism in the agriculture sector to ensure at least provision of Rs.32000 minimum wage in the province.

They said this at a seminar organized by Hari Welfare Association on the inauguration of the women peasant literacy centre in Matiari district.

This is one of the out of 12 basic literacy centres HWA has set up for rural peasants women in the district.