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dailyindkhi@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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PM launches Shuhada Package for martyred federal govt officials; resolves to eliminate smuggling

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday launched the Shuhada Package to support the families of the federal government officials martyred in the line of duty.

The prime minister announced the package during his visit to the family of late Customs Inspector Syed Hasnain Ali Tirmizi, who was martyred in a firing incident in Dera Ismail Khan a few days ago. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, PML-N leaders, and senior government officers were present.

PM Sharif handed over a cheque under the Shuhada Package to the family of martyred personnel and assured his government's all-out efforts for the security of the customs officials serving to purge the country of smuggling.

Offering Fateha for the martyred soul and sympathizing with the bereaved family, he said that the Shuhada Package, earlier announced by the Punjab government, had now been extended to the federal government and could be revised further considering the country's financial position.

The package comprises cash assistance, housing allowance, free education and medical treatment. Under the package, the family members of a martyred sepoy will get Rs 10 million cash assistance and Rs 13.5 million housing allowance besides free education and medical treatment. The family of a martyred customs inspector will be entitled for a Rs15 million cash and Rs25 million housing allowance along with free education and medical facilities.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah speaks at The Citizens Foundation (TCF) event: "Greatness of Spirit: Book Launch" at a local hotel.

CM lauds TCF's journey from 5 schools to 2000 across country

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that underprivileged students from The Citizens Foundation (TCF) have successfully qualified for admission to prestigious universities and many of them have also passed the CSS exams and are currently working in both national and multinational companies.

"The motto of TCF 'Quality education for the less privileged' has had an immense impact on our society," This he said while speaking at a program The Citizens Foundation (TCF) organised in collaboration with the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) - "Greatness of Spirit in Karachi: Book Launch & Magsaysay Laureate Reunion," at a local hotel.

CM Shah appreciated TCF's journey from five schools to nearly 2,000 schools across the country in the urban slums and rural communities. "The Sindh government has given its 500 Schools to TCF for their out-

standing results," he said and added that he was so pleased to know that the TCF students were qualifying for admission in prestigious Universities and some of them have completed MBA from IBA, and LUMS and qualified for CSS exams and Fulbright scholarships and now serving in national and multinational companies. The CM expressed his admiration for the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, for initiating this prestigious award which is now considered an 'Asian Noble Prize' in the field of public service.

He also commented that it's heartening to know that the RMAF award was given regardless of nationality, religion and ethnicity. On behalf of the people of Pakistan especially the province of Sindh, Murad Shah extended heartfelt gratitude to RMAF for giving 13 prestigious awards to our legends who have given their lives to the country for a public cause.

No complaints of judicial interference under my watch, says CJP

KARACHI (INP): Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Thursday said he had not received a single complaint from any high court judge about interference in judicial affairs since assuming the office.

The top judge was addressing Sindh High Court Bar Association (SHCBA). He said no one has reported any meddling in the judicial process to him, adding that all the incidents were taken place before the start of his tenure as CJP.

He categorically stated that interference in judiciary was not acceptable but at the same time set the record straight that he had not received any such complaint under his watch.

On March 25, six judges of the Islamabad High Court wrote a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council regarding the "interference of intelligence agencies in judicial matters".

The letter was written by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Justice Saman Raffat Imtiaz.

Later, the Supreme Court initiated suo motu proceedings on the IHC judges' letter and sought a proposal from the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC), the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), high courts and the federal government to address the issue.

"They should suggest what should be the institutional response and mechanism to address the issues like the ones raised in the letter [of IHC judges] and ensure that such issues do not arise in future and, if they do, to fix liability and proceed against those responsible," the top court said in its April 3 order in the suo motu case.

President stresses joint efforts to control Malaria

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday urged all provincial governments and stakeholders to collaborate in controlling the spread of malaria and make Pakistan a Malaria free country.

"I urge our healthcare providers both in the public and private sector, the non-governmental organizations, private entities, philanthropists, community leaders, media and other stakeholders to raise awareness about the Malaria control issues but also in alleviating the sufferings of ailing human beings through improved diagnostic and therapeutic procedures," the president said in a message on World Malaria Day.

He said the day which is observed every year on April 25, is a reminder of the need to undertake concerted efforts in raising awareness and finding solutions to meet the growing challenges to control Malaria in the endemic areas of the country.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani presides over a Senate House Business Advisory Committee meeting, held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

Sindh Minister reviews ongoing projects of Building Department

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister of Works and Services Ali Hassan Zardari paid a surprise visit to the projects of the Building Department here on Thursday.

The Minister directed to complete the work of Sindh Judicial Academy immediately. On this occasion, he reviewed the ongoing projects of the Ministers' Secretariat Karachi and directed to improve the quality of work.

Ali Hassan Zardari also visited the under-construction anti-corruption complex. He inspected the

'Missing' Saudi woman, Pakistan man found in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): A Saudi woman who went missing in Pakistan and was reported kidnapped to the police had been found in Karachi living with her alleged kidnapper, a young Pakistani man, who has been detained by the police, BBC Urdu reported.

The woman had arrived in Lower Dir district of KP province to visit a local man, who worked with her in Saudi Arabia as a driver. They went missing shortly afterwards and an FIR was registered in Islamabad. It accused the Pakistani man, Abdul Wahid, of kidnapping a Saudi national.

Nawaz Sharif ready to talk to Imran Khan for the sake of national interest: Rana

LAHORE (Online): PML-N leader Rana Sana Ullah has said Nawaz Sharif is ready to talk to Imran Khan for national interest.

In an interview with a private channel Rana Sana Ullah said Thursday that PML-N Quaid was ready for talks with Imran Khan and he proved it through his action.

He went on to say Nawaz Sharif extended invitation to Imran Khan for talks when 126 days dharna was underway. He held Imran Khan popularity among the people is zero but he has got vote of resistance and sympathy during general election.

PTI founder was using inappropriate words

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.28 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,280.5 million while foreign reserves held by the central bank reached \$ 7,981.2 million in the week ended on April 19, 2024.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign reserves held by the SBP decreased by \$ 74 million to \$ 7,981.2 million during the week under review, due to external debt repayments. Meanwhile, Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on April 12, 2024, were \$ 13,373.7 million.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori giving away cheque to a man during motorcycles and checks distribution ceremony at Governor House.

PM Shehbaz Sharif announces 150 buses for Karachi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced 150 buses for Karachi during his inaugural visit to the city.

The premier revealed the decision to allocate 150 buses following a request from Sindh Minister for Transport, Sharjeel Inam Memon, during a high-level meeting. Sindh Transport Minister Memon had requested the prime minister to provide 300 buses for Karachi.

However, the PM said that the federal government would provide 150 buses to the Sindh transport department to add them to their existing fleet. PM Shehbaz also commended the efforts of the Sindh government in

enhancing transportation services for the public during his visit to the Sindh government's transport system.

About the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project, the CM told the prime minister that on the advice of the federal government, a revised feasibility study was undertaken in 2023 and shared with the Economic Affairs Division & Ministry of Transport, People's Republic of China on May 4, 2023.

He requested the prime minister to order the ministry concerned to facilitate the framework agreement for the execution of the KCR under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Govt determined to eradicate terrorism: Attaullah Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar Thursday informed the National Assembly that the government was determined to eradicate terrorism from the country.

In response to a calling attention notice regarding increase in incidents of suicidal bombing in different parts of country and increase in number of incidents of snatching, gunshots in Karachi, Hyderabad and Kashmir, he said, that following the Peshawar APS attack, the National Action Plan was devised with consensus among all stakeholders, and its implementation

was promptly initiated. The minister said that provinces extended cooperation to the federal government in executing the National Action Plan. He highlighted the commencement of two successful operations, Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad, aimed at eradicating terrorism from the country.

Tarar said that after the operations, a significant decline was witnessed in terrorist incidents in the country. He expressed regret over the lack of meetings and implementation of the National Action Plan by the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in 2018.

Industries promotion can help eliminate unemployment: Commerce Minister

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Industries and Commerce Jam Ikramullah Dharejo on Thursday directed the officials concerned to utilize all available resources for the promotion of small industries in the province and observed that promotion of industries can help eliminate unemployment in Sindh.

The Sindh Minister for Industries and Commerce said this while chairing a meeting of officers of Sindh Small Industries Corporation (SSIC).

Managing Director SSIC Dr. Sarwat Faheem and other officers also attended the meeting. The Minister directed the officers to improve the recovery and also ensure timely payment of salaries of employees of the SSIC.



ABBOTTABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif handing over PM's Shuhada Assistance cheque to the father of Custom's Inspector Hussain Ali Tirmazi Shaheed.

Divorced from ground reality: Pakistan rejects US human rights report as biased and politicized

Contents of report are unjust, relying on inaccurate information and disconnected from ground realities, says FO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday categorically rejected the recently released 2023 Country Report on human rights practices issued by the US State Department terming its contents "unfair, based on inaccurate information and completely divorced from the ground reality".

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Bloch, in a statement, said that the US State Department's annual exercises of preparing such unsolicited reports lacked ob-

jectivity and remained inherently flawed in their methodology. "These reports use a domestic social lens to judge human rights in other countries in a politically biased manner. This year's report is once again conspicuous on its lack of objectivity and politicization of the international human rights agenda," she added.

The spokesperson said the report clearly demonstrated the double standards thus undermining the international human rights discourse.

MQM-P 'agrees' on removal of Tessori

KARACHI (INP): The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) changed its strategy for the appointment of Governor Sindh as Kamran Khan Tessori is likely to be replaced by another party colleague.

The sources privy to the development said that the MQM-P, which earlier refused to replace Kamran Tessori, has now shown flexibility on the matter.

The sources within the party said that Barrister Farogh Naseem has emerged as a strong candidate to replace Kamran Tessori for the slot. It is pertinent to mention here that the ruling

party in Sindh, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had demanded Tessori's removal from office, accusing him of "creating a political divide and further widening the gap between urban and rural areas of the province."

PPP Sindh General Secretary Senator Waqar Mehdi said that Tessori has not succeeded in closing the gap between the urban and rural areas and politics.

In the reply, the MQM-P termed Mehdi's statement as unnecessary and non-serious. "The PPP should address the growing sense of deprivation during its 15-year rule in Sindh."



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf interacting with Naval Heads of various Navies during 19th Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao China.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Digital growth

Technology divides us. According to a new UNDP report on Pakistan, titled Doing Digital for Development — Access, Adopt, Anticipate, Accelerate, noticeable differences in human development can be seen between those districts that have embraced digital transformation compared to those that have lagged behind.

The report, which underscores the importance of equitable and safe access to technology as an important means of improving human lives, places Pakistan in the category of countries where digital development can thus far be described as ‘moderate’ at best. Over half the country still has no access to the internet, and its women remain grossly underserved. Of the women who do have access to digital technologies, 83.5pc say their phone ownership is policed by their spouses or parents. Meanwhile, digital development among the richest 20pc of its population is 15 times greater than in its poorest quintile. Clearly, digital access has become a marker of privilege in Pakistan. This needs to be urgently addressed. Pakistan is already among the lowest-ranked countries in the UNDP’s Human Development and Gender Inequality indices. It would appear that sound digital development policies alone can greatly strengthen its present dismal standing in these areas. It is encouraging, in this context, to note that Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has described access to digital resources and modern technologies as a fundamental human necessity, just like electricity, healthcare or education.

One hopes that this belief is more commonplace at the policy level than it presently seems to be. Democratizing digital development will catalyse a rapid, if not immediate, improvement in human development indicators for the underserved segments of the Pakistani citizenry. All that is needed is some creative rethinking about how they can be better integrated into the overall digital development scheme, especially in terms of ease of internet access. The government may, for example, consider an internet subsidy for underdeveloped districts. With policy debates on what Pakistan needs to re-emerge from its economic slump repeatedly hitting the resource-constraint wall, perhaps it is time our policymakers started giving more weightage to the role accelerated digital development can play in turning things around quickly and sustainably. Apart from erasing distortions in intra-district human development, increased adoption of modern technologies will also help improve national productivity. Consider that next door in India, even roadside hawkers have adopted digital payment systems simply because they ease commerce for both buyers and sellers in myriad different ways. There is no reason why the ordinary people of Pakistan will not embrace similar digital-driven improvements in their everyday lives, especially if they are also backed enthusiastically by the government under a comprehensive digital development policy. The existing infrastructure may need improvements over time, but for now, a concerted push in the right direction is a good place to start.

Impact of disinformation and deepfakes on journalism



By Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

The term “disinformation” has gained significant traction in the modern world, but the act of disseminating false or misleading information for the purpose of deceiving or manipulating is far from a new phenomenon. Throughout history, diverse forms of misinformation, propaganda, and deceptive communication have been prevalent, shaping narratives and influencing public opinion across different cultures and periods.

In ancient Athenian Democracy, during the 5th Century BC, political orators like Alcibiades and Themistocles were known for using persuasive techniques that sometimes included exaggerations or selective presentation of facts to sway public opinion in their favor. Similarly, during the medieval period, monarchs, religious institutions, and rulers utilized manuscripts, artworks, and proclamations to control narratives and shape perceptions. Feudal societies witnessed lords and monarchs employing narratives and loyalty oaths to reinforce hierarchical structures and cultivate loyalty among vassals.

The Renaissance and Enlightenment periods saw the use of pamphlets, newspapers, and books to disseminate ideas challenging established norms. However, it was during World War I and II that disinformation and propaganda emerged as lethal tools, blatantly used by various nations to shape public perception, boost morale, and vilify the enemy. The ideological conflict of the Cold War further intensified these efforts, with both the United States and the Soviet Union engaging in extensive propaganda campaigns to influence global opinion.

With the emergence of television and global media, disinformation campaigns evolved into more sophisticated endeavors. Governments and non-state entities began using misinformation to pursue political objectives, contributing to the surge in dissemination of conspiracy theories. During this era, Muslims and Islam faced heightened prejudice and discrimination fueled by unfounded propaganda and disinformation.

Fast forward to the digital age, the advent of the internet and social media has introduced fresh avenues for the swift transmission of information, encompassing both accurate and erroneous content. In contemporary democracies, there is growing apprehension about disinformation campaigns, fake news, and online manipulation.

Instances have been noted where countries engage in false flag operations to tarnish the reputation of neighboring nations.

In this digital age, where information and media play pivotal roles in shaping public opinion, the emergence of deepfake technology introduces a disconcerting dimension to the landscape of election campaigns. Deepfakes refer to the sophisticated use of artificial intelligence to create realistic video or audio content, often featuring individuals saying or doing things they never actually did.

One of the primary concerns is the ease with which deepfakes can be disseminated through social media platforms, where information spreads rapidly and is often consumed without thorough scrutiny. A manipulated video of a candidate could go viral, shaping public perception and influencing voter sentiments. The impact extends beyond its immediate release, as media outlets scramble to verify authenticity, leading to heightened atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust.

Furthermore, the potential for deepfakes to target key moments in an election campaign adds complexity, overshadowing policy discussions and shifting focus to sensationalism. In the wake of these concerns, countering deepfake threats in election campaigns emerges as a critical imperative.

Policymakers, technology companies, and electoral bodies must collaborate to develop robust mechanisms for detecting and preventing the spread of deepfakes. Educating the public about their

existence and potential impact becomes a cornerstone of resilience against this new form of misinformation.

Safeguarding the integrity of democratic processes demands a proactive approach that addresses the evolving challenges posed by artificial intelligence-driven manipulation. As election campaigns unfold in an era of deepfake technology, the need for vigilance and collective action is clear. It’s imperative to uphold the principles of truth and transparency to preserve the integrity of democratic institutions.

In an era where information spreads at the click of a button, the veracity of news has become increasingly precarious. The rise of disinformation and deepfakes has unleashed a torrent of challenges for journalism, threatening the very foundations of truth and credibility.

Disinformation, the deliberate spread of false or misleading information, has become a weapon of choice for various actors seeking to manipulate public opinion.

With the proliferation of social media platforms, misinformation can reach millions within seconds, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Journalists, once revered as gatekeepers of truth, now find themselves wading through a quagmire of falsehoods, struggling to separate reality from propaganda.

Deepfakes, a more insidious offspring of disinformation, pose an even graver threat. These sophisticated AI-

generated videos manipulate audio and visual content to create hyper-realistic simulations of individuals saying or doing things they never did. From politicians to celebrities, no one is immune to the potential damage wrought by deepfakes. They can be used to fabricate speeches, incite violence, or even sway elections, sowing discord and eroding trust in institutions.

The impact of disinformation and deepfakes on journalism is multifaceted and profound. Firstly, they undermine the credibility of news sources, fostering a climate of skepticism and distrust. In an environment where misinformation thrives, audiences become increasingly cynical, questioning the legitimacy of even well-researched reporting. This erosion of trust not only undermines the integrity of journalism but also poses a threat to democracy itself, as an informed electorate is essential for a functioning society.

Moreover, the proliferation of disinformation and deepfakes complicates the already daunting task of fact-checking. Journalists are forced to navigate a labyrinth of deceit, verifying sources and cross-referencing information in a race against time. Yet, even the most diligent efforts can falter in the face of sophisticated disinformation campaigns designed to deceive and mislead.

Furthermore, the prevalence of disinformation and deepfakes has pro-

found implications for the future of journalism itself. As trust in traditional media continues to erode, journalists are forced to grapple with existential questions about their role in society. How can they uphold the principles of truth and accuracy in an age of rampant deception? How can they regain the trust of a skeptical public inundated with misinformation? These are daunting challenges that demand innovative solutions and a reimagining of the journalistic landscape.

In response to these challenges, news organizations must prioritize transparency and accountability. By openly acknowledging the prevalence of disinformation and deepfakes, journalists can begin to rebuild trust with their audiences. Moreover, collaboration between journalists, technologists, and policymakers is essential to developing strategies for combating the spread of misinformation and safeguarding the integrity of the news.

Ultimately, the impact of disinformation and deepfakes on journalism is far-reaching and profound. As society grapples with the implications of an increasingly digital and interconnected world, the need for reliable and trustworthy journalism has never been greater.

Only by confronting these challenges head-on can journalists hope to fulfill their essential role as guardians of truth in a world besieged by falsehoods.

Commerce News

Domestic wheat production grew by 5.4%, 29.69 mln tons output estimated

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) was informed on Thursday that wheat production in the country during the current season (2023–24) grew by 5.4 percent as compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year.

The FCA met here with Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain in chair, which was also attended by the relevant federal and provincial authorities.

While reviewing the performance of the Rabi crops (2023–24), the Committee observed that wheat production for the current season was estimated at 29.69 million

tons as the crop was sown over an area of 9.6 million hectares.

The output of other crops, including onions, for the period under review was estimated at 1.92 million tons from an area of 0.122 million hectares.

The increase in production was 3.9%, whereas the area decreased 5.4% over the last year, whereas tomato production during the season was estimated at 627.47 thousand tons from an area of 50.9 thousand hectares. The production of the above-mentioned commodity increased by 3.9%, whereas the area decreased by 0.3% over the last year.

Meanwhile, potato production for 2023–24

was estimated at 8.1 million tons from an area of 0.3 million hectares. The increase in production was 27.9% over the target assigned by the last FCA.

The FCA held detailed deliberations over the production targets for essential Kharif crops in 2024–25 and decided to fix the production target of cotton at 10.8 million bales, whereas the 8.7 million-ton production target for rice is over 3.1 million hectares of land.

The maize target was fixed at 9.3 million tons of production over 1.5 million hectares of land.

The Committee also fixed the production target of sugarcane for 2024–25 at 76.7 million tons over an area of 1.3 million hectares.



ISLAMABAD: High-powered Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) mandated to oversee strategic measures for ensuring food security in the country, held its meeting under the Chairmanship of Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research.

Action taken against officers not recovering 85% tax: Secretary

SARGODHA (APP): Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control (ET&NC) Punjab Secretary Masood Mukhtar has said that action has been taken against the officers who did not meet the target of 85% taxes recovery across the province.

He expressed these views during a surprise visit to the Excise and Taxation office Sargodha Division, here on Thursday. The Secretary said that Excise and Taxation Officers (ETOs) would have to go to the field themselves whereas the recovery of district

Khushab and district Bhakkar would be monitored closely.

He said that he had already issued clear instructions to the divisional directors and ETOs of all districts to meet the recovery targets given by the government up to 100% in all circumstances. “All districts are required to recover 85% of their target in May”, he instructed.

He said that the districts whose recovery was not as per the target had been directed to monitor the recovery of ETOs of their respective districts on a daily basis.

Faysal Bank unveils strong financial results for the Q1’24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Faysal Bank Limited (FBL), one of the leading Islamic banks in Pakistan, continued with its growth stride during the first quarter of 2024, whereby the profit after tax doubled to PKR 6.5 billion as compared to Q1 2023. Earnings per share increased from Rs. 2.12 to Rs. 4.29, while the Bank also declared an interim cash dividend of Rs. 1/- per share, i.e. 10 percent, said a news release here on Thursday.

The total assets reached a new high of Rs.1.5 trillion, with deposits increasing to

Rs.1.050 trillion and loan book in excess of Rs. 603 billion. Advance-to-Deposit Ratio (ADR) was at a healthy 55 percent, while its Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 18.57 percent, well above the regulatory requirement.

The sound financial performance and the strong balance sheet footing is reflective of the Bank’s solid business fundamentals coupled with prudent risk management practices.

It further solidifies the bank’s position as a key player within the Islamic banking segment.

WB Director urges ‘bold’ fiscal reforms for Pakistan’s macroeconomic stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Bank’s (WB) Global Director for Governance Arturo Herrera Gutierrez on Thursday stressed the need for ‘bold’ fiscal reforms to address Pakistan’s debt distress and achieve macroeconomic stability.

Speaking at a lecture organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Gutierrez highlighted the urgency of sustainable fiscal reforms, drawing from international experiences.

“Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture where it can either pave the path for

sustained economic growth or fall into the recurring traps of debt distress,” Gutierrez remarked.

He discussed historical economic challenges faced by countries like Mexico in the 1980s and how these experiences shape fiscal strategies today.

Moreover, he outlined the necessity of strong macroeconomic frameworks, robust debt management practices, and the establishment of institutional arrangements to ensure discipline in fiscal policy.

Gutierrez emphasized that ensuring

fiscal sustainability required a comprehensive long-term strategy, not just balancing budgets annually.

“These measures are critical for building credibility and securing access to financial markets,” the WB director said while emphasizing the need to maintain consistency over time to avoid the economic problems of the past.

He brought to the attention the concerning resurgence of debt distress globally, particularly post-COVID-19, necessitating a re-evaluation of fiscal sustainability approaches.

PSX loses 80 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday shed 80.49 points, a negative change of 0.11 percent, closing at 71,971.40 points against 72,051.89 points the previous trading day. A total of 798,527,177 shares valuing Rs.27.542 billion were traded during the day as compared to 599,401,643 shares valuing Rs. 24.459 billion the last day. Some 389 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 173 of them recorded gains and 191 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 25 remained unchanged.

Kazakh envoy stresses quantum jump in bilateral trade

FAISALABAD (APP): The business community must avail all opportunities to give quantum jump to bilateral trade between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, said Yerzhan Kistafin, ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Addressing a selected gathering at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that both countries were enjoying cordial relations, but the business community must translate these ties into economic terms.

He termed the

business-to-business (B2B) contacts brother-to-brother relations and said that it had paved the way to fully exploit the untapped business potential. He said that three cities of Pakistan had already been declared sister cities of Kazakhstan and now Shymkent has been declared sister city of Faisalabad because of their similarities in textile. He urged textile exporters to invest in this city to directly capture the five Eurasian countries including Russia and Belarus.

Ahad Cheem lauds UNDP’s cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahsan Khan Cheema on Thursday appreciated the role of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the provision of critical assistance to Pakistan, especially during floods 2022 and support to the International Partners’ Support Group (IPSG).

The minister was talking to United Nations Assistant Secretary General (ASG), Asia, and the Pacific, Ms. Kanni Wignaraja during a meeting here, according to press

statement issued by Economic Affairs Division.

Assuring government’s commitment, he said government was looking forward to continue cooperation with UNDP for bridging financing gap in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The minister stressed that better visibility of off budget projects and alignment between UNDP projects and national development objectives were essential in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

Meta delegation calls on Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-member delegation of Meta called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja in her office on Thursday.

The delegation comprised Dania Mukhtar, Head of Public Policy for Pakistan at Meta and Taabeer Ather, Manager Public Policy for Pakistan.

The meeting discussed in details responsible use of social media platforms, said a news release.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb in a meeting with Keith Svendsen, CEO of APM Terminals, accompanied by Ambassador, Ambassador Jakob Linulf.

CM KP chairs meeting on CRBC Left Canal project

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, chaired a meeting on the CRBC Left Canal Project on Thursday and decided to issue the project tender by July of this year.

The meeting was attended by officials from relevant provincial and federal government departments.

During the briefing, the participants were informed that an agreement had been reached between the federal and provincial governments on previously finalized project implementation details. Briefings were provided by relevant authorities on various aspects of the project during the meeting.

It was informed that Rs. 20 billion would be allocated for the project in the upcoming fiscal year's development program, with the federal government also pledging Rs. 10 billion in the upcoming fiscal year's PSDP for the project.

According to the briefing, funds for the project will be shared from the federal government and 35% from the provincial government.

Approximately 286,000 acres of barren land will be irrigated through the Left Canal Project. The meeting also decided to initiate another project to irrigate an additional 90,000 acres of land in southern districts. The Chief Minister instructed

relevant authorities to commence work on this project.

He further instructed them to ensure the completion of all necessary arrangements for tendering the CRBC Left Canal Project by July of the current year. The Chief Minister emphasized that the CRBC Left Canal Project is indispensable for the food security of the province and highlighted its importance for the country's food security. He stressed the need for early completion without any further delay. The Chief Minister stated that the provincial government would provide funds on a priority basis for projects, considering the economic viability of the project.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister Food, Bilal Yaseen inaugurating a squad of vehicles for checking stale meat in the office of Punjab Food Authority in the provincial capital, along with DG Food Authority, Asim Javed and others in the Provincial Capital.

Minister launches special 'Meat Safety Task Force' in Punjab Food Authority

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yaseen launched a special 'Meat Safety Task Force' in the Punjab Food Authority (PFA), here on Thursday.

The force would consist of meat specialist doctors to ensure detailed inspection of meat, being supplied across province.

While talking to the media, he said meat safety teams would conduct detailed inspections of slaughter houses, frozen meat units, meat shops, and meat processing units on daily basis. The force will also check the meat supplied at the entry points and meat markets of

all districts including Lahore. A complete record of traceability of meat coming from poultry farms, slaughterhouses will also be compiled and strict checking of entry points will be ensured in the morning hours.

The Food Minister said that Punjab Food Authority discarded 60 thousand kg of substandard meat during checking of meat shops and entry points in a few days. He said that elements hostile to health will never be allowed to do business and continuous checking is going on to ensure quality milk, meat and food.

FC man shot dead in Bannu

PESHAWAR (APP): An official of Frontier Constabulary (FC) was shot dead by unknown motorcycleists in the Janikhel area of Bannu district on Thursday. Police said FC personnel, Abid Ullah was on leave from duty and was on the way home after working in his fields when armed motorcycleists shot him dead.

On receiving information, the police force arrived at the scene and collected evidence for investigation.

The Body of the deceased FC personnel was shifted to the hospital for medico-legal procedure. Police have launched a search operation in the area to arrest the perpetrators involved in the killing.

Nine dead, 1,318 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE: Nine persons were killed and 1,318 others injured in 1,276 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 607 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 711 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

Complete digitalization of EPI in progress; efforts on to maintain cold chain: Qasim

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah Thursday said that efforts are underway to completely digitalize Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI) besides maintaining the cold chain to ensure the supply of vaccines in every nook and corner of the province.

These views were expressed by Syed Qasim Shah while speaking as chief guest at a ceremony held here on Thursday to commemorate 50 years of the EPI programme. During the ceremony, Provincial Health Minister paid special tribute to Prof Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Khan (Late) for being the founding father of paediatrics.

Collective efforts needed to curb terrorism: Barrister

Independent Report PESHAWAR: The recent spike of targeted attacks on security forces, customs and police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is a national issue which must be addressed with collective efforts, said Barrister Dr Saif here on Thursday. "We can overcome and eliminate the menace of terrorism with united efforts," Barrister Dr Saif said.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's Advisor on Information and Public Relations Barrister Dr Saif further said that terrorism is our country's serious matter and police, security forces and law enforcement agencies are fighting war against terrorism with available resources. Hundreds of civilians and security forces have lost their lives during the recent terrorists attacks, he added. Police and security forces are vigilant and determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism, he said. He said such sacrifices of law enforcement and security agencies would further strengthen our resolve.



ABBOTTABAD: Workers of Water and Sanitation Services Company Abbottabad (WSSCA) are cleaning and collecting solid waste during cleaning drive campaign at the Main KKH road in Abbottabad.

Order for recounting cannot be given after issuance of forms, 47, 48 and 49: LHC

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) while upholding the success of Rana Bilal Ijaz of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) from National Assembly (NA) constituency NA-81 Gujranwala has declared illegal the Election Commission (EC) notification for recounting.

EC has issued notification for recounting on PML-N candidate Azhar Qayyum application. It has been maintained

in the written order recounting cannot be conducted after issuance of forms 47, 48 and 49. The notification for counting of votes could be issued during election process.

According to written decision EC notification in connection with recounting has no legal standing. The court declares null and void EC notification for recounting. Notification of recounting which was issued on March 18 is illegal.

PHC seeks details of registered cases against KP CM

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court comprising Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Dr Khurshid Iqbal on Wednesday sought details of registered cases against Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Ali Amin Gandapur by anti-corruption watchdog.

The counsel of Ali Amin Gandapur had filed an application in the high court for details of cases.

Investigation Reports (FIRs) in Dera Ismail Khan region while the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor informed about one case against the KP CM. Counsel for petitioner Arshad Ali told the court that Anti-corruption officials have not yet submitted their response. Justice Shakeel Ahmed wondered how the anti-corruption department could not respond to the government. The Advocate General replied that an important meeting was scheduled for April 29 in which all the stakeholders including the police chief would be invited to take important decisions related to political cases.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali is being presented Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission Annual performance Report 2023 by the Chairman KPPSC Mr. Sikandar Qayyum at Governor's House.

WWB directed to identify board's land for revenue generation

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labor, Fazal Shakoor Khan has directed Workers Welfare Board (WWB) to identify commercial land of the board sand utilize it for revenue generation.

He issued these directives while chairing meeting of WWB held here on Thursday. He also directed to form a committee comprising three members from WWB

to compile ideas and suggestions regarding land identification and sought a report within two week time. He said that construction of plazas, shops and parks on the commercial land would play a vital role in revenue generation for WWB. On the occasion, the minister was briefed about vocational, technical and general educational institutions working under WWB.

International News

155 killed in Tanzania as heavy rains lash East Africa

Monitoring Desk TANZANIA: At least 155 people have died in Tanzania as torrential rains linked to El Nino triggered flooding and landslides, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa said on Thursday.

Tanzania and other countries in East Africa — a region highly vulnerable to climate change — have been pounded by heavier than usual rainfall during the current rainy season, with dozens of deaths also reported in Kenya.

Majaliwa said more than 51,000 households and 200,000 people have been affected by the rains, with 155 fatalities and 236 injured.

"The heavy El Nino rains, accompanied by strong winds, floods, and landslides in various parts of the country, have caused significant damage," Majaliwa told parliament in Tanzania's capital Dodoma.

"These include loss

of life, destruction of crops, homes, citizens' property, and infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and railways," he added.

El Nino is a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat worldwide, drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere, and can have a devastating impact in East Africa.

In Burundi, one of the poorest countries on the planet, around 96,000 people have been displaced by months of relentless rains.

In addition, about 45 people have been killed in Kenya since the start of the rainy season in March, including 13 who lost their lives in flash floods in the capital Nairobi this week.

Kenyan President William Ruto convened an emergency multi-agency meeting on Thursday to respond to the crisis after

torrential rains triggered floods that caused chaos across the city, blocking roads and bridges and engulfing homes in slum districts.

Kenyans have been warned to stay on alert, with the forecast for more heavy rains across the country, while officials said people living in the most vulnerable areas would be relocated.

"The government will do whatever it takes, apply all the required resources in terms of money and personnel to make sure that lives are not lost and the people of Kenya are protected from this disaster," Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua told a press briefing.

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian response agency OCHA said in an update this week that in Somalia, the Gu (April to June) rains are intensifying with flash floods reported since April 19.



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech on Europe in the amphitheatre of the Sorbonne University in Paris, France.

Israel pummels Gaza after US approves military aid

Monitoring Desk GAZA STRIP: Israeli warplanes pounded the northern Gaza strip for a second day on Wednesday in a fierce assault that has shattered weeks of comparative calm, and Israel said it was moving forward with plans for an all-out assault on Rafah in the south.

The renewed attacks came after the US Congress approved \$13 billion in military aid for Tel Aviv.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said the Senate's approval of the aid

package already passed by the House of Representatives sent a "strong message to all our enemies" in a post on social media platform X.

Even though Western countries, including the United States, have pleaded with it to hold back from attacking the city on Gaza's southern edge, aspookesperson for PM Benjamin Netanyahu's government said Israel was "moving ahead" with its plans for a ground operation on Rafah, but gave no timeline.

Taliban gov't joins climate change talks for first time

Monitoring Desk KABUL: The Taliban government has entered the first stage of discussions with the United Nations, donors and non-governmental organisations, over the impact of climate change in Afghanistan, organisers said on Wednesday.

After four decades of war, Afghanistan is ranked as one of the countries least prepared to tackle the effects of climate change that are spurring extreme weather conditions and warping natural environments.

4 injured as cavalry horses run amok in London

Monitoring Desk LONDON: A number of military horses, including one covered in blood, ran amok on the streets of central London and injured at least four people on Wednesday.

The horses belong to the Household Cavalry, which acts as the British monarch's official bodyguard and takes part in ceremonial duties.

They are garrisoned at Hyde Park barracks, less than a mile away from Buckingham Palace.

Blinken calls for US, China to manage differences

Monitoring Desk SHANGHAI: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on Thursday on the United States and China to manage their differences "responsibly" as he went on a charm offensive ahead of expected tough talks.

A day before meeting Beijing's top brass to tackle thorny issues including Russia, Taiwan and trade, Blinken's visit to Shanghai has seen him sample local food, watch a basketball game and stroll along the city's famous Bund promenade. Visiting the local Communist Party leader in a room with sweeping views of the Shanghai skyline, Blinken said US President Joe Biden was committed to "direct and sustained" dialogue between the world's two largest economies after years of mounting tension.

"I think it's important to underscore the value —

in fact, the necessity — of direct engagement, of speaking to each other, laying out our differences, which are real, seeking to work through them," Blinken said.

"We have an obligation for our people — indeed an obligation to the world — to manage the relationship between our two countries responsibly."

The Chinese Communist Party secretary for Shanghai, Chen Jining, welcomed Blinken partly in English and spoke of the importance of US businesses to the city.

"Whether we choose cooperation or confrontation affects the well-being of both peoples, both countries and the future of humanity," Chen told him. The country's financial capital, Shanghai is often a stepping stone to power in China, with President Xi Jinping previously serving briefly in the city.

'Europe could die,' Macron warns, as he calls for stronger defences

Monitoring Desk PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron appealed on Thursday for stronger, more integrated European defences and said the continent must not become a vassal of the United States, as he outlined his vision for a more assertive European Union on the global stage.

With just three years left of his second and final term in office, and having lost his parliamentary majority in 2022, Macron, 46, wants to show his critics that he retains the energy and fresh thinking that helped propel him into the presidency in 2017 and that he has not become a lame duck leader.

"There is a risk our Europe could die. We are not equipped to face the risks," Macron said in his speech at the Sorbonne University in Paris, warning that military, economic, trade and other

pressures could weaken and fragment the 27-nation EU.

Macron said Russia must not be allowed to win in Ukraine, and he called for a boost in Europe's cybersecurity capacity, closer defence ties with post-Brexit Britain, and the creation of a European academy to train high-ranking military personnel.

"There is no defence without a defence industry... we've had decades of under-investment," he said, adding that Europeans should give preference to buying European military equipment.

"We must produce more, we must produce faster, and we must produce as Europeans," he said.

Macron said Europe risked falling behind economically in a context where global free-trade rules were being challenged by major competitors.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Shanghai Party Secretary Chen Jining at the Grand Halls in Shanghai, China.

Russia vetoes a UN resolution calling for the prevention of a dangerous nuclear arms race in space

Monitoring Desk UNITED NATIONS: Russia on Wednesday vetoed a U.N. resolution sponsored by the United States and Japan calling on all nations to prevent a dangerous nuclear arms race in outer space, calling it "a dirty spectacle" that cherry picks weapons of mass destruction from all other weapons that should also be banned.

The vote in the 15-

member Security Council was 13 in favor, Russia opposed and China abstaining.

The resolution would have called on all countries not to develop or deploy nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction in space, as banned under a 1967 international treaty that included the U.S. and Russia, and to agree to the need to verify compliance.

Pro-Palestinian US high school students accuse school of censoring speech

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: Some US students at Washington, D.C.'s Jackson-Reed High School filed a lawsuit on Wednesday alleging the public high school's administrators censored them by prohibiting pro-Palestinian events. The lawsuit said administrators treated the Arab Student Union, a student club at the high school, differently from other groups like the Black Student Union and the Asian Student Union by restricting its activities.

"For the past four months, it [the Arab Student Union] and its members have been trying to engage in expressive activities at the high school — showing a documentary film, putting up posters, distributing literature, presenting a cultural programme — but have been stopped at every turn by the school administration."

