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Joint presser

Pak, Iran for promoting bilateral trade ties, business activities at border areas

Pakistan, Iran agree on joint efforts to eradicate terrorism, promote cooperation in diverse fields; Both countries agree increasing trade volume to \$10bn; Raisi arrives in Islamabad today on 3-day visit; visiting dignitary presented guard of honour after premier receives him at PM House; Iranian president will also visit Lahore and Karachi;

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday agreed to enhance bilateral trade ties and promote business activities at the border areas to ensure development and prosperity of the people of two countries.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, in a press talk along with President of Iran Dr Ebrahim Raisi after witnessing the signing of bilateral agreements and MoUs at the PM House, said under the leadership of the Iranian President, the two countries could bring development and prosperity in their respective sides by turning their borders into hub of business activities.

He said during their meeting, the two sides held detailed discussions on various fields of mutual interests including economy, trade, investment, diplomacy, security and culture.

The Iranian President, who arrived here on Monday on three-day official visit to Pakistan along with a high-powered delegation, said that the trade volume between the two brotherly countries was not below the existing potential and they wanted to increase the volume to US \$10 billion annually.

He stressed that steps were needed to enhance border markets to give spur to the business and trade activities at the border areas, besides enhancing security.

He said that the two countries shared common affinities and no one could separate them, adding the two sides in their meetings, decided to further promote the bilateral ties between the two countries in trade and economic sectors.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Iranian President H.E. Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi in a delegation level talks between Iran and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and the Iranian President, Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, held a meeting, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Zardari, Raisi pledge to strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday reiterated the resolve to further broaden mutually beneficial cooperation in various areas of common interest.

Both sides underscored the need for operationalizing bilateral trade mechanisms to boost the volume of trade up to \$10 billion, and also urged the need to work together to overcome the challenges being faced by the region.

This was discussed between President Asif Ali Zardari and visiting Iranian President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi during a meeting held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The two leaders also discussed key regional and global developments, particularly the situation in the Middle East.

President Zardari expressed deep concern over the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza and strongly condemned

Israel's military aggression against its people of Gaza that had resulted in the killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians. He said that Pakistan would consistently and unequivocally support the Palestinian cause.

Both the presidents reiterated the need for enhanced international endeavours to bring an end to the Israeli suppression of the Gaza people, and for enhanced humanitarian relief and assistance.

President Zardari said that Pakistan and Iran enjoyed close fraternal ties based on shared religion, culture, and history, which needed to be further strengthened for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries.

He thanked Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi for being the first Head of State to visit Pakistan after the general elections, which reflected his deep personal commitment to Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Dr. Ahmad Vahidi and Iran's Justice Minister Amin Hosein Rahimi.

CJP gives indication to change the period of filing appeal in SC

KARACHI (Online): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has given indication to change the period of filing appeal in Supreme Court (SC).

The CJP remarked don't make fun of the court. The application for adjournment is given repeatedly.

During the hearing of 15 years old case the CJP got annoyed.

The CJP sought opinion from senior lawyers in the matter of change of period in the case of ownership of plot against the citizen in SC Karachi registry.

The CJP inquired during hearing of plot dispute case what should be time limit for appeals against the decisions of high courts.

The lawyers replied decision of five members bench of SC is there regarding period of appeal.

Farogh Nasim said decision of 5-member bench is limited. You will have to

review it afresh.

During the hearing of the case barrister Salah ud Din Farogh Nasim, Khalid Javed and others said to review the matter administratively.

The CJP remarked ok we see this matter. This will be solved administratively or on judicial side.

Earlier the CJP expressed annoyance over seeking time by counsel for city government during the hearing of case in Karachi registry.

SC has summoned mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab immediately.

Secretary local government has also been directed to appear forthwith.

The CJP remarked during the hearing of the case that you people have made fun of the court. Run the case if you file it.

The CJP remarked the case has been filed since the last 15 years. Why do you not run it.

Pakistan, Iran agree to ban terrorist organizations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday decided in principle to ban terrorist organizations in their respective countries.

The decision to the effect was taken in a meeting between Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, and his Iranian counterpart Dr Ahmad Vahidi and Law Minister Amin Hussain Rahimi.

The two sides agreed on a joint plan of action to deal with the menace of terrorism being a common problem, with further improving mutual support and exchange of intelligence information. It was decided to sign a security agreement in that regard at the earliest.

It was also decided to provide all possible facilities to the Pakistani pilgrims on the occasion of Arba'een. The Iranian Interior Minister extended an invitation to his Pakistani counterpart to visit Iran in that regard where the Iraqi counterpart would also be invited.

The two sides observed that joint initiatives would help ensure the provision of best facilities to the pilgrims.

Interior Minister Naqvi thanked his counterpart for the invitation to visit Iran.

PM welcomes Iranian President in Persian language

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday welcomed Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi in the Persian language.

During their joint press stakeout, the prime minister recited Allama Taqi Bahar's Persian verses about Pakistan, in which the poet had invoked divine blessings for the country, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister, on the occasion, read out a Persian couplet for the visiting President which warmly welcomed his arrival in Pakistan.

The prime minister's eloquence in the Persian language brought smiles on the faces of the Iranian President and other participants who were pleased to hear such remarks.

They also applauded the prime minister's gesture.

BA session postponed

QUETTA: The session of Balochistan's provincial assembly scheduled to be held today (Tuesday) has been postponed.

According to the official notification issued here on Monday, the new date of assembly session would be announced later.

Reiterate call for immediate ceasefire PM, President Raisi condemn Israel's indiscriminate use of force in Gaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Iranian President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi on Monday expressed strong and unequivocal condemnation of the indiscriminate use of force by Israeli occupation authorities in Gaza for over seven months.

They reiterated the call for international efforts to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, lifting the siege and provision of humanitarian relief to the people of Gaza.

The two leaders, in a meeting, discussed the entire range of bilateral relations and exchanged views on important regional and global developments, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Underlining the rich history of relations between Pakistan and Iran, they also reaffirmed commitment to expand wide-ranging bilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of trade, energy, connectivity, culture and people-to-people contacts.

Ministers and senior officials from both sides were present in the meeting.

Both sides agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade to US \$10 billions in the next five years.

They also agreed to cooperate in developing joint approaches to confront common challenges including the threat of terrorism.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister Mir Ali Madam Jattak and Advisor Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Safaraz Bugti

Government announces to launch air ambulance service in Balochistan

QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has announced to launch air ambulance in the province.

According to the official handout issued here on Monday, the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti said that the provincial government has decided to initiate the air ambulance for the first time in history of the province.

The Chief Minister said that the Peoples Air ambulance would be available for shifting of the patients on an emergency basis.

He said that the provincial government decided to use the airplane for public instead of selling it.

He said that one of the

two planes would be converted into air ambulance.

He said that no additional resources are required for launching the air ambulance in the province rather the available resources are being utilized for the purpose.

The Chief Minister said that service delivery is being improved in all sectors including health services in the province.

He said that the desired results can be achieved by changing the priorities of decision making in the province.

He said that reforms are being brought in the health sector to bring improvement in the service delivery.

Younas Zehri declared as Leader of Opposition in BA

QUETTA: The Member of Provincial Assembly, Mir Younas Aziz Zehri has been declared as Leader of Opposition in Balochistan Assembly with immediate effect and until further orders.

This was announced in an official notification issued here by the Provincial Assembly's secretariat on Monday.

According to the notification, the acting Speaker of Provincial Assembly, Ms Ghazala Gola declared Mir Younas Aziz Zehri as Leader of Opposition in pursuance of Rule 19-C of the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan, Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business 1974.

It may be mentioned here that Mir Younas Aziz Zehri belongs to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI).

Dissatisfied with law & order situation despite huge spending: Zia urges masses to back institutions for restoration of peace in Balochistan

Independent Report QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove has urged the masses to back their institutions for restoration of peace in the province.

The Minister said that he can't see the people being killed anymore, therefore, we have to strengthen the institutions now.

Mir Ziaullah Langove was chairing the meeting held to review the security measures here on Monday.

The Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem briefed the meeting about security measures.

The meeting focused on how to tackle the security issues besides improving security in the province.

The meeting also reviewed the targeted attacks

on the security forces.

Besides, the strategy of zero tolerance against terrorism, law and order situation and anti-smuggling activities were also reviewed.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Home said that no negligence would be tolerated in the mandate given by the masses.

He said that there are clear directives of the Chief Minister that no negligence would be tolerated in maintaining law and order.

He said that law and order is priority of the government.

He stressed the need to maintain better coordination between police and levies forces to maintain peace.

He also stressed to strengthen local intelligence

network for information sharing.

He asserted that the action would be taken against the concerned high ups of area where incidents of terrorism would occur.

He directed to take legal action against the display of arms in Quetta.

He said that terrorism would be uprooted from the province.

He also stressed that it is necessary to eliminate corruption from the security forces.

He said that action would be taken against any personal involved in corruption.

The Minister also directed to ensure enforcement of biometric system in all the institutions.

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COAS Munir, Iran's President Raisi call for boosting ties

Gen Munir describes Pakistan-Iran border as 'border of peace and friendship'; Raisi emphasizes that Pakistan, Iran can attain peace for both nations by fostering cooperation between two armed forces

Independent Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) met His Excellency Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The discussion primarily focused on matters of mutual interest, notably regional peace, stability, and border security.

Both sides concurred on the necessity to bolster bilateral cooperation while jointly striving for regional stability and economic prosperity.

COAS described the Pak-Iran border as "the border



of peace and friendship," emphasizing the need for improved coordination along the border to prevent terrorists from jeopardizing the longstanding brotherly relations between the two neighboring countries.

President Ebrahim Raisi emphasized that by fostering cooperation between the two Armed Forces, Pakistan and Iran can attain peace and stability for both nations and the region.

Eleven terrorists killed in two separate operations in KP

RAWALPINDI (APP): Waziristan district, the Army troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location as a result of which one more terrorist was sent to hell.

The terrorists were found involved in numerous criminal activities in the area against security forces as well as the innocent civilians. Arms and ammunition were also recovered after the operation.

"Locals of the area appreciated the operations conducted by the Security Forces, who are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from this country," the ISPR said.

During the operation, and after an intense fire exchange, ten terrorists were killed.

In another encounter that held in North



QUETTA: Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove presiding over a meeting regarding law and order situation in the province



QUETTA: Provincial Advisor Mir Ali Hassan Zehri and MPA Mir Samad Khan Gorgage meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti

PML-N satisfied with by-elections results; dismisses PTI's allegations

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) top brass has voiced its contentment with the outcome of Sunday's by-elections.

Giving his reaction to a private TV news channel, prominent PML-N leader Rana Sanaullah expressed his party's satisfaction with the voter turnout during the by-elections, highlighting a noticeable absence of PTI supporters at the polling stations.

Sanaullah underscored that while the PML-N has consistently accepted electoral results, it has also diligently raised objections through proper channels. In contrast, he criticised PTI's approach, accusing its founder, Imran Khan, of attempting to undermine the electoral process.

The seasoned politician emphasised that despite the traditionally low voter turnout in by-polls, the PML-N was gratified by the level of participation and the ongoing issuance of Form 45 from all polling stations.

Addressing potential concerns, Sanaullah asserted that any irregularities observed during the polling would be promptly addressed through formal complaints. Furthermore, he extended an olive branch to PTI, urging the party to collaborate with PML-N in identifying and rectifying flaws within the electoral system.

Reflecting on the broader political landscape, Sanaullah expressed willingness to engage in dialogue with other parties, including the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazi (JULF), to resolve pertinent issues.

The PML-N's stance on the by-elections serves as a significant marker in Pakistan's political discourse, signalling both their commitment to democratic processes and their readiness to engage in constructive dialogue for the betterment of the nation.

Atta Tarar slams PTI's false narratives

Meanwhile, information Minister Attaullah Tarar celebrated what he deemed as a clear demonstration of the public's trust in the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

The minister highlighted the by-election results as a testament to the nation's confidence in the PML-N's leadership, asserting that the measures undertaken by the government are a direct reflection of the people's trust.

In a pointed critique, the Information Minister remarked on the conspicuous absence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) voters during the by-elections,

Bajaur by-poll proves impartiality of KP gov't: Gandapur

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Ali Amin Gandapur on Monday said that results of the by-poll in Bajaur proved the impartiality of the provincial government during the election process.

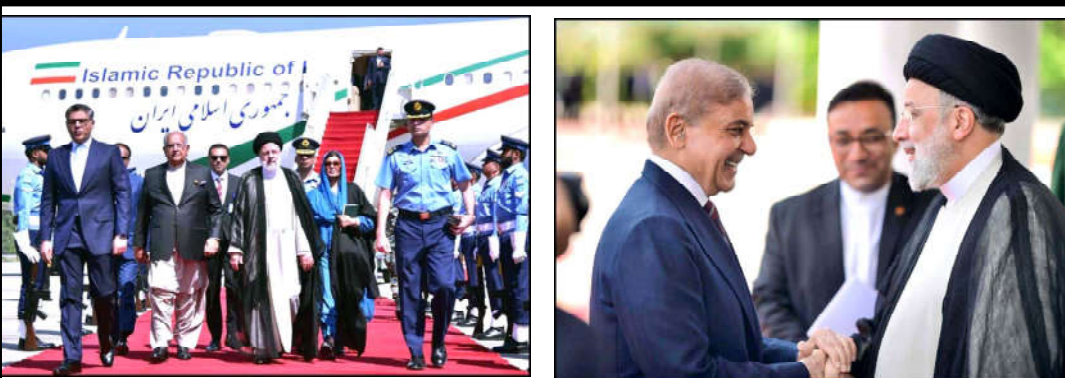
Talking to media here, he said, he respects the decision taken by the voters in Bajaur by-election, adding that it was evident of that fact that there was no interference by the provincial government at any level.

Ali Amin congratulated the newly elected representatives and hoped that they would work for strengthening democracy and welfare of the masses.

He said that if someone was concerned about the election's result, might point out the illegal activity by the provincial government at any level, adding that they believe in free and fair conduct of elections and respect the decision of all the voters. The CM criticized a letter of the federal government referring to power piling in the province, and said that the Center should first have discussed the matter with the KP government before sending the letter. "I take responsibility for the people of my province. Our people have made great sacrifices for the motherland and using the word thief for our people was inappropriate."

Currently KP was facing the worst load-shedding of electricity, said the CM and added that IGP had been directed not to take action against anyone until a way out was finalized.

Glimpses of Iranian President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Pakistan



Pak, Iran for promoting bilateral trade....

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President Dr Raisi said that there were a number of common issues including fight against terrorism, efforts to curb organized crimes and smuggling, in which the two sides could enhance their cooperation.

The president stressed that it was significant to further broaden the bilateral ties for the benefits of the two countries, besides continuity of cooperation at the highest level.

He said that the historic and durable ties between Iran and Pakistan provided them opportunity to fully utilize them for the welfare and prosperity of the two nations.

President Raisi said that Iran had achieved immense progress in science and technology and the country was ready to share their experiences and knowledge.

President of Iran Dr Ebrahim Raisi, conveying best regards from the people and the Supreme Leader of Iran to the people of Pakistan, said they had always been supporting the oppressed people of various areas of the world, specially the people of Gaza and had always been defending Islam and raising their voice for the freedom of Quds Al-Sharif.

He believed that today people in different parts of the world were in pain due to current situation in Palestine. At the same time, he said the international organization such as Untied Nations and UN Security Council who claimed to support human rights, could not perform their core responsibility.

President Raisi emphasized that the people belonging to all religions across the world including that of Iran and Pakistan, were calling for an end to the oppression and barbarism against the people of Palestine.

The Iranian President believed that the position adopted by the people around the world and by the Palestinian resistance would surely be realized one day.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif commended Iran's robust stand for the Muslims of Gaza and the barbarism being committed against them, saying that Pakistan in this regard also fully supported the oppressed people of Gaza.

He said the resolution of the UN Security Council with respect to Palestine was being violated. He regretted that over 35,000 people had so far been martyred in Palestine.

He also called for raising voice at various international forums including Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) till complete ceasefire in Gaza.

At the same time, the prime minister said the Kashmir valley had also been turned to red by the blood of the oppressed Kashmiris. He believed that Kashmir will also be liberated soon.

The prime minister thanked the Iranian President for visiting Pakistan, saying that he was the first head of state of any country who visited Pakistan after general elections held in February 2024.

He said both Iran and Pakistan enjoyed very close and brotherly relations which spanned over centuries. He said the two countries enjoyed historic relations with deep-rooted people-to-people bonds and similarities in religion and culture.

He stressed that these close and brotherly relations should be strengthened and promoted for mutual benefit as well as development and prosperity in the region.

Earlier Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President of Iran Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, in a meeting held here at the PM House on Monday, agreed to bolster bilateral relations in diverse fields, particularly in combating terrorism in the region.

The meeting saw a comprehensive exchange on enhancing Iran-Pakistan relations across various sectors, underscoring the significance of fostering stronger ties between the two nations.

Key areas of discussion included strategies to augment trade volumes and bolster communication network, reflecting a shared commitment to advancing economic collaboration.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif highlighted the historical significance of President Raisi's visit, marking it as the first head of state visit to Pakistan following the February 2024 general elections, a gesture warmly embraced by the Pakistani nation. President Raisi, upon his arrival at the PM House, was accorded a guard of honor, showcasing the esteemed welcome extended by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his delegation.

President Raisi's three-day official visit, accompanied by a delegation comprising ministers and businessmen, underscores the depth of bilateral engagement between the two countries. During his stay, President Raisi is scheduled to hold meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Chairman of Senate, Speaker of National Assembly, as well as provincial leadership in Lahore and Karachi, emphasizing the comprehensive nature of his engagement with Pakistan.

The agenda for the visit encompasses discussions on regional and global developments, with a particular focus on elevating Pakistan-Iran ties across multiple fronts, including trade, connectivity, energy, agriculture, and fostering people-to-people contacts.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Leader of opposition in the Senate Senator Shibli Faraz at Parliament House.

IGP directs zero tolerance policy on corruption and illegal activities

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: According to details, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi holds an introductory meeting with Islamabad Capital Police senior officials at Central Police Office Islamabad, a public relations officer said.

He said that, during the meeting, the IGP Islamabad gave all police officers a seven-day ultimatum to elevate their performance.

He said that command is solely in the hands of Allah Almighty, and we will work as a team and utilize all available resources efficiently. Every official should be visible in their respective jurisdiction for crime prevention and effective security.

A special action team consisting of DIG Law and

Order, SSP Headquarters, and AIG Operations has been formed, which will ensure monitoring and implementation of assigned tasks in all divisions of Islamabad.

IGP Islamabad further said that, the CIA efficiency will be further enhanced for crime prevention, while professional training will be provided to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Islamabad.

Additionally, the anti-riot unit of Islamabad Capital Police will be given ideal training to effectively resolve the situation of law and order in Islamabad, and the police station staff will also be trained in anti-riot techniques.

Effective operations will be carried out against dacoits, proclaimed offenders, and criminal record holders to curb crime. Additionally, overseas runaway absconders

will also be brought back. During the meeting, IGP Islamabad, Syed Naseer Ali Rizvi, issued special directives to senior police officers for the welfare of martyrs' families, and said that the welfare of martyrs' families is our top priority.

Senior police officers will participate in the marriages of martyrs' children, and a representative of Islamabad Capital Police will also participate in parents and teachers meetings at martyrs' children's schools. Free education and scholarships will be provided to martyrs' children, he added.

For citizens' welfare, he said that there will be a zero tolerance policy on corruption, land grabbers mafia, and misconduct with the general public. Moreover, the F-6 service center will remain open 24 hours for public service.

Earthquake jolts Khuzdar, adjoining areas

KHUZDAR (INP): An earthquake of magnitude 4.3 jolted Balochistan's Khuzdar district on Sunday night. According to the seismological center, the depth of the earthquake was 27 kilometers and the epicenter was near Khuzdar district.

People came out of their houses in fear by reciting Kalma-e-Tayyaba. However, no loss of life or damage to property was reported from any part of Khuzdar so far.

Zia urges masses...

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He said that Balochistan has suffered due to the killings in tribal disputes. Therefore, it is our responsibility to stop killings in the tribal disputes.

He said that annually, Rs. 55 billion are being spent on law and order in the province but we are not satisfied with the law and order situation.

He stressed that we have to take meaningful steps for eliminating terrorism.

He asked all the institutions to remain alert for coping with the security challenges.

Meanwhile, the meeting expressed dissatisfaction over performance of the civil defence.



QUETTA: Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Durrani meeting with acting Speaker Balochistan Assembly Ghazala Gola

Creating Bright Futures:

Xin Xing launches Solar Initiative in Takal Village

RAWALPINDI (APP): China's leading energy sustainability company, Xin Xing, has embarked on a transformative journey in Takal Village, Punjab, Pakistan, bringing hope and progress to over 3,000 residents from middle to lower-income backgrounds.

The collaborative effort between Xin Xing and the Takal village community marks a significant step towards sustainable development and prosperity.

The warm reception extended by Takal's elders, nobles, and community members exemplifies the spirit of unity and shared commitment to progress. Public representatives from diverse political affiliations also joined hands in supporting this noble cause, a news release said. Dr. Talat Shabbir, a resident of the Takal Village and Director of the China Pakistan Study Center at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, delivered a welcoming address, underscoring Xin Xing's commitment to brightening Pakistan starting from the heart of its countryside.

He emphasized that over 200 deserving families were identified to benefit from this endeavor, receiving solar kits to alleviate their energy needs. Expressing gratitude for the community's collaboration, Chairman of Xin Xing, David Lee, affirmed their dedication to improving lives starting with Takal Village. He further said, Xin Xing International Solar Energy Technology Development Private Co., Ltd., renowned for its lithium-ion battery manufacturing and comprehensive power system solutions, is poised to establish a production facility in Pakistan by 2025.

Iranian president Raisi given guard of honour at PM House

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of Iran Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi on Monday was given a guard of honour as he arrived here at the PM House to meet Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, along with his high-powered delegation.

President Raisi landed in the federal capital earlier in the morning for a three-day official visit accompanied by his spouse and a delegation comprising ministers and businessmen.

Prime Minister Shehbaz welcomed the visiting dignitary on his arrival at the venue of the formal welcome ceremony.

The national anthems of both countries were played as the Iranian president stood at the salute dais along with the prime minister.

The smartly turned-out contingents of the

armed forces presented a guard of honour to President Raisi.

PM Sharif and President Raisi planted a sapling at the lawns of the PM House in connection with the Earth Day.

Later, both the Iranian President Raisi and Prime Minister Shehbaz introduced their respective delegations to each other before proceeding for the tete-a-tete and delegation-level talks. This marks the first visit by any head of state to Pakistan after the general elections in February 2024.

As the Iranian president landed at Nur Khan Airbase, a red carpet was rolled out to accord him a warm welcome. Federal Minister for Housing and Works, the minister-in-waiting, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada received the guest. Clad in traditional at-

tires, two children presented bouquet of flowers to the dignitary, who is accompanied by his spouse and a high level delegation comprising the foreign minister and other members of the cabinet, senior officials as well as a large business delegation.

During the three-day visit, President Raisi will meet the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chairman of Senate and Speaker of National Assembly. He will also visit Lahore and Karachi and meet with the provincial leadership.

Besides discussing regional and global developments, the two sides will have a wide-ranging agenda to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties and enhance cooperation in diverse fields including trade, connectivity, energy, agriculture, and people-to-people contacts.



ISLAMABAD: President of Iran H.E. Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif unveiling plaque of renaming an avenue of Islamabad as Iran Avenue.

On Earth Day, PM calls for responsible use, recycling to achieve plastic-free society

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the international community observes the annual Earth Day on Monday, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif urged the countrymen to reaffirm their commitment to using plastic responsibly to reduce plastic waste and embrace recycling and eco-friendly alternatives.

Observed annually on April 22, this year's Earth Day is being observed under the theme of "Planet vs. Plastics."

"As we unite to observe this day under the theme, "Planet vs. Plastics" that calls for a 60% reduction in plastic use by 2040, let us reaffirm our commitment to use plastic responsibly to reduce plastic waste that is not only polluting our oceans, lakes, and rivers but are also making inroads into our food systems, posing a direct and serious threat to human health," the prime minister, in a message to the nation.

He appealed the people for a pledge to reduce the use of single-use plastics, embrace recycling and eco-friendly alternatives, and advocate for stronger environmental policies at every level of

society.

Calling Earth Day a reminder of shared responsibility towards protecting our planet – for now and for future generations, he said though Pakistan was among one of the most climate-vulnerable countries, there was little awareness about the risks of climate change threatening the development, the well-being, and economic security of the citizens.

"Year after year, we are witnessing its devastating impacts – from changing seasonal weather patterns, rising temperatures, variability of monsoons and melting of glaciers in the north, further compounded with recurrent extreme weather events and natural disasters – to the slower onset events of sea level rise, warming seas and loss of ecosystems."

The prime minister said that the effects of climate change had exacerbated over the years, which puts the country at an even greater economic and physical risk. Hence, we understand the urgency of taking bold and decisive steps to confront these challenges and build resilience in the face of adversity, he added.

He said the government was leading the charge and remained committed to making its contribution as it had initiated an exhaustive consultative process with the line ministries, provincial environment departments, ICT administration, industries and other relevant stakeholders for developing Single-Use Plastics (Prohibition) Regulations, 2023 as well as restriction on use of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) bottles in federal ministries/divisions.

"These initiatives underscore our commitment towards promoting a sustainable circular economy for plastics by reducing waste, and consumption, and encouraging reuse, recycling, and material recovery. To achieve a plastic-free society and effectively combat the escalating issue of plastic pollution in Pakistan, it is imperative to address the underlying causes and promote a holistic approach for managing plastic waste," the prime minister remarked. Highlighting the role of provincial governments and local authorities as of prime importance, he urged the citizens to play their role in safeguarding the planet for the prosperity of all.

SC dismisses appeal against re-polling in PP-9

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday dismissed an appeal against the decision of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for re-polling in four polling stations of PP-9 Balochistan.

Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi observed that the ECP has given reasons of unnatural voting turn out in said area. He remarked that about 85 to 90 percent voting turn out is recorded in the area where a less number of women come out to cast their votes.

A three member bench headed by Justice Amin ud Din Khan heard the appeal filed by Pakistan Muslim League-N's candidate Nawab Changaiz Khan.

The top court dismissed the request to stop the re-polling in the said polling stations and ordered the ECP to make the arrangements as per schedule.

During hearing, the ECP's lawyer pleaded that the election commission has ordered for re-elections keeping in view all the facts. He said that the commission was providing opportunity to the two sides to contest the polls.

The lawyer said that there were the decisions of the court that re-elections would be conducted on unnatural voting turn out. He said that the ECP has ordered re-polling in seven polling stations, out of which, the polling has been concluded in three stations.

Petitioner's lawyer adopted the stance that they didn't get the Form-45, adding that the ECP uploaded it for some time and then removed from the website. After hearing arguments, the bench announced the short order while the detailed judgments be issued later on.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani planting a sapling of magnolia tree in the lawn of the Parliament House.

APHC calls for unity to counter Indian aggression in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has strongly condemned the political, religious, and cultural aggression by the Bharatiya Janata Party government against the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC spokesman Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas in a statement in Srinagar emphasized the need for unity within the organization to counter the BJP's anti-Kashmir and anti-peace agenda.

The BJP's hostile policy towards Kashmir is driven by its racial bias, Hindutva ideology, and its aim to establish a Hindu Rashtra. The APHC spokesperson urged the members of the organiza-

tion to unite and resist India's attempts to erase the political, cultural, and religious identity of the Kashmiri people.

The Indian government is not only trying to erase the Kashmiri identity but also suppressing political activities and silencing the voices of the oppressed. Harassment against civil society, religious scholars, academics, journalists, and human rights defenders continues unabated.

The recent visits of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to the territory were seen as a cruel joke played on the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP government is misleading the world about the real situation in IIOJK.



H.E. Dr. Jamileh Alamolhoda, wife of the Honourable President of the Islamic Republic of Iran paid a visit to Pakistan Sweet Home an orphanage for abandoned children across the country providing basic necessities of life including education and shelter Islamabad.

Mobilink Bank carries out nationwide plantation drive

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital microfinance bank, Mobilink Bank, carried out a nationwide plantation drive to help enhance the country's forest cover as well as mitigate the looming impacts of climate change.

Mobilink Bank's teams from all 109 branches nationwide participated in the drive with remarkable enthusiasm and planted approximately 5000 saplings to protect the environment and hand down a serene and greener Pakistan to future generations, said a news release.

The campaign was part of Mobilink Bank's Climate Action Program, Change to Sustain, which envisions a sustainable and prosperous Pakistan that is resilient and effectively shielded against the far-reaching impacts of climate change. Sustainability is at the heart of the Bank's corporate philosophy, which

it seeks to replicate through impactful social responsibility initiatives for the broader societal benefit.

Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and digital services to nearly 160 million customers in six dynamic markets that are home to 7% of the world's population.

Apart from the teams from Mobilink Bank branches, senior officials from district administration, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), faculty members of various educational institutions, and members of civil society also attended the plantation drives in multiple cities and towns.

They expressed hope that the endeavor will boost environmental protection, besides improving air quality and the natural beauty of the urban and rural centers, thereby positively impacting the lives of citizens.

Iranian President's wife visits NUML

ISLAMABAD (APP): The wife of President of Iran Dr. Alam-ul-Huda on Monday visited the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) where she interacted with the students and faculty.

Dr. Alam-ul-Huda, on the occasion, also unveiled the English version of her book "The Art of Feminine Living" enriching the academic discourse with her insights and perspectives.

She also shed light on the important role played by women as explained in Islam.

An honorary degree was also conferred on her, the Foreign Office said on its official X account.

NHMP recovers 121 kg drugs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorways Police (NHMP) foiled a drug smuggling attempt and recovered 121 kilograms of drugs here on Monday.

According to the Motorway Police spokesman, the police signaled a suspicious vehicle near Sawabi to stop but the accused drove away and left the vehicle on being chased.

During the search, the NHMP police recovered 87 kg of hashish and 34 kg of heroin from the secret compartments of the vehicle. After completing the preliminary reports, the drugs were handed over to ANF Peshawar for further proceedings, the spokesman added.



ISLAMABAD: PM's coordinator on climate change & environmental coordination Romina Khurshid Alam chairs review meeting to discuss implementation of measures against plastic use in the country.

Crackdowns by ICT admin to ensure Naan, Roti reduced prices

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, all the Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates have intensified their efforts for enforcement of government rates of Roti/Naan at Rs 16 and Rs 20 for a standard serving size of 120 grams in the Federal Capital.

In line with these directives, Assistant Commissioner Nellore has checked the notified rates of Tandoors in the Sohan and surroundings and imposed a fine of Rs 3000 for violation of the rates, said the ICT's spokesman Dr. Abdullah Tabassum here on Monday.

Similarly, Assistant Commissioner Sadder has visited the area's Tandoors and imposed fines of Rs 10,000 to three Tandoors for flouting the government

prescribed rates.

Meanwhile, a citizen namely Muhammad Amir, a resident of the Sohan area lamented the lack of reduction in prices at local Tandoors and Nan-bais, where Roti was still being sold at Rs 20 and Naan at Rs 25. Furthermore, Shahid Ali from the G-8 area, highlighted that despite the government's intervention, Tandoors and Nan-bais in the Federal Capital were selling Roti at Rs 25 and Naan at Rs 30, placing a financial burden on the residents. On the occasion, Dr. Abdullah assured that strict action would be taken against those violating the price regulations.

He emphasized that Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates have been assigned specific tasks to ensure compliance with the new Roti and Naan prices in Islamabad.

IHC seeks comments in plea regarding capital's senate seats

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday sought comments from respondents in a petition seeking to declare domicile of federal capital as compulsory for the candidates contesting elections against the senate seats of Islamabad.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition filed by the former president IHC Bar Council Nayab Gardezi through his counsel Barrister S.M. Yawar.

During the course of proceeding, the petitioner's counsel pleaded that two seats of the upper house have been allocated for the federal capital.

Court awards life imprisonment in wife's murder case

ISLAMABAD (APP): A District and Sessions Court here on Monday awarded life imprisonment to an accused in a murder case.

According to Police spokesman, Muhammad Kashif had killed his wife by sprinkling oil on her over a family dispute in the jurisdiction of Wah Cantt Police Station in 2021. The Judge pronounced the verdict after recording evidence from the witnesses and final arguments from both sides. The court also ordered a fine of Rs 300,000 on the convict.



ISLAMABAD: Director General FDE Tanveer Ahmed and Principal Prof. Sadia Ibrar awarding degrees among the successful students during 22nd convocation of Model College G-10/4.

173 graduates awarded degrees in IMCG G10/4 convocation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad model college for girls Post-Graduate G10/4 during its 22nd convocation, has awarded degrees to as many as 173 graduates in departments of BS Maths BSCS, BS Zoology and ADP among 67 graduates who got Roll of honor.

Moreover, six gold medals were also awarded to the top position holder students including Ayesha Taus BSCS, Sehrish BSCS, Noor Fatima BS Maths and Maham Ali in BS zoology.

The BS teachers also received a certificate of appreciation for their best results including Anjam Ara, Sumaira Quaratul Ain, Saba Mudasar Sabeel-e-Haafi, Shazia Ashraf Sameen, Behjatul Mudassar, Safia Ifthikhar Uzma Nazir and Asma Usmani.

The convocation was held at the college auditorium on Monday in which DG FDE Dr. Muhammad Tanvir participated as the

chief guest accompanied by guests of honor Dr. Aamer Saeed Bhatti, Dean of Natural Sciences QAU and Dr. Muhammad Anees former Dean Social Sciences QAU, while Principal Prof. Saadia Ibrar presided over the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, chief guest, Muahmad Tanvir said "the development of Pakistan lies in the pursuit of modern education.

The students should step into practical life. Now work side by side with men and make your place in society. Half of the population of our country consists of women, in which the number of working women is negligible".

He also introduced the new project to be launched for students to enhance their skills in IT.

Dr. Amer appreciated the graduates and prayed for their future endeavors.

Dr. Idrees advised the pupils to follow the path of hardwork and kindness to get overall success in life.

Rabia Naseem Farooqi takes oath as MNA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rabia Naseem Farooqi on Monday took oath as a Member of the National Assembly (MNA) and Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath to her, who later signed the registration roll. The Election Commission of Pakistan on April 17, 2024 notified Rabia Naseem Farooqi from PML-N as a returned candidate for the seat reserved for women.



ISLAMABAD: People travelling on the top of a passenger bus at Khanna Pul may cause any mishap and needs the attention of concerned authorities.

UK Education delegation visits HEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of leading UK universities, education champions and experts led by the UK Government's International Education Champion, Sir Steve Smith, has embarked on a five-day visit to Pakistan.

This significant visit aims to strengthen educational ties between the two nations and explore opportunities for long-term, collaborative partnerships in higher education.

The visit co-organized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, the British High Commission, British Council in Pakistan, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and the Department for Education (DfE), comprises of senior

representatives from the UK Government, British Council and 16 leaders of UK higher education providers and sector organisations who look forward to deepening, expanding and setting up new links with their Pakistani counterparts. The visit supports the objectives of the flagship initiative Pakistan UK Education Gateway launched in 2018. Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui was chief guest in the inaugural conference held at HEC Secretariat on Monday. Chairman HEC, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, UK International Education Champion, Sir Steve Smith, British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott, Executive Director HEC.

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Not without reform

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb says that the economy has the potential to grow 10 times its size to \$3tr for Pakistan to become a high-middle-income country by 2047. That kind of growth or economic transformation is difficult to achieve but not impossible.

India accomplished this feat to become the world's fifth-largest economy by increasing its GDP size from less than \$275bn to over \$3.7tr in 30 years after it began to implement reforms in earnest to overcome a severe crisis resulting from external debt. Ever since then, it has not returned to the IMF for help and is now well on its way to becoming the world's third-largest economy after the US and China. The latter country has grown at a very high annual rate of 10pc for decades to transform itself into the world's second-largest economy and rescue millions of its citizens from poverty.

There are also examples of countries from Southeast Asia, which were poorer and less developed than us a few decades ago but have surged far ahead now. Even if these economies have not fully overcome poverty or become high-middle-income nations, their examples show us the road to better days. But, living on borrowed money as we are, the periodic articulation of a desire to grow rich will not help.

If Pakistan is desirous of becoming a middle-income economy and halting the perennial cyclical crisis that has led Mr Aurangzeb to Washington to seek the country's 24th bailout from the IMF, it must follow the path others have successfully taken. It has to honestly and diligently implement reforms to limit the role of government in the economy, encourage the private sector to lead growth, and integrate the economy with the region and global economy by breaking down barriers to trade and investment.

These reforms, however, will have to be based on enduring fiscal stabilisation policies. A similar message was conveyed by IMF's Middle East and Central Asia director Jihad Azour the other day when he emphasised that giving precedence to reforms to revive the Pakistani economy was more important than the loan amount being negotiated. "What is important at this stage is to accelerate the reforms, double down on the structure of reforms in order to provide Pakistan with its full potential of growth," he said.

The problem with us is that our ruling elite is still trying to find a way around the tough reforms that will hit their privileges. The creation of SIFC as an island of facilitation for certain foreign or local investors is one example of this attitude. But it will be difficult to carry on like this. With geopolitical rent becoming more and more difficult to draw, a debt-ridden country cannot daydream its way into becoming a middle-income economy.

Aqdas Afzal

Despite the sweltering heat, there is tremendous energy all around the Galle Face Green, the famous sea front park, close to the presidential secretariat in Colombo. Young people are swarming around the fancy ice cream trucks, tourists are gushing out of the packed five-star establishments, while shoppers are thronging the entire area.

This positive energy is a far cry from the economic chaos that engulfed Sri Lanka only two years ago. Faced with a serious yet manageable set of economic challenges, the Lankan government mishandled the economic crisis by making poor, politically motivated choices, one after the other, forcing the island nation to declare bankruptcy.

Predictably, the economic crisis rapidly transformed into a political crisis. This same sea front park became the epicentre of anti-government protests. Soon, the president resigned and sought safety abroad, while, in one of the most-watched images around the world, the Sri Lankan people took over

the President's House in Colombo.

People may not remember, but this unfortunate chaos was very closely followed in Pakistan, especially as one mainstream political party, perhaps to regain lost leverage, repeatedly claimed that Pakistan was headed in Sri Lanka's direction.

All that chaos now seems distant history as the sound of the gently crashing waves heralds serenity. According to the IMF, inflation has come down from 70 per cent to 5.9pc, while the economy has started expanding after one and half year of contraction. This economic turnaround might tempt some to conclude that stabilisation was always on the cards. Just like water in a vigorously shaken bottle calms down when left to rest on a table, all chaotic systems eventually find endogenous order, right? Wrong.

Sri Lanka's remarkable economic recovery would not have come about without the tremendous leadership displayed by President Ranil Wickremesinghe. Wickremesinghe, the nation's veteran statesman, stepped up to the plate

when no other political leader was willing to take the reins since the much-needed and IMF-supported economic reforms — more taxes, market-determined exchange rate and privatisation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) — were guaranteed to cost dearly in terms of political capital.

But, what was it about Wickremesinghe's leadership style that enabled him to stabilise and then turn around an economy that had hit rock bottom? When this question was posed to experts at the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, they pointed to Wickremesinghe's leadership and political experience as one of the main reasons behind economic stabilisation as it led to a calming of the nerves of various international lenders.

Also, despite little representation in parliament, Wickremesinghe was far more effective on the global stage. This arena became crucial for bringing the IMF to the rescue. Indeed, the IMF found a credible partner in the shape of Wickremesinghe, someone

with economic policy experience who would not turn their back on the economic reforms required to put the South Asian nation on the path of sustainable economic recovery and growth.

Wickremesinghe's leadership, experience, tact and credibility enabled him to rightly front-load the most painful part of the economic adjustment, namely a market-determined exchange rate that led to the Sri Lankan rupee losing half its value against the US dollar. For waiting for an optimal time for tough economic decisions would only have made the situation worse.

In addition, one reason behind the Sri Lankan economic turnaround was institutional structure. Since 1978, Sri Lanka has had very powerful presidents who are both head of state and head of government. Where Sri Lanka's 'executive presidency', has been criticised by some for being overly autocratic, it enabled Wickremesinghe to push through his economic reform agenda that could have otherwise been stalled by a rowdy parliament.

This massive eco-

nomical adjustment has extracted a steep social cost in Sri Lanka. A recent report by the World Bank revealed that poverty has increased from 11pc in 2019 to 26pc in 2024. Moreover, not only did inflation at 70pc negatively impact the quality of life, many small businesses have closed down permanently, while the country has suffered from significant brain drain.

Still, this Lankan tale may not necessarily have a happy ending. Instead, Wickremesinghe might actually end up looking a lot like a Shakespearean tragic hero, a noble figure who experiences a downfall as Sri Lanka still faces threats, which could very well bring the process of economic reforms to a halt.

The first threat comes in the shape of geopolitics as India has decided to lay claim to the small island of Katchatheevu, whose ownership India itself transferred to Sri Lanka in 1974. S. Jaishankar, India's external affairs minister, belonging to the governing political party, the BJP, has suddenly

started sounding bellicose on this issue implying foul play around the events that led to the handing over of the island.

It's possible that this recent bluster is aimed at winning more seats in the coming elections, especially in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, where BJP won no seats in 2019. But, given Indian foreign policy's newly found belligerence and previous Indian misadventures on the island, things — and the economy — could potentially go south.

The second threat comes in the shape of political uncertainty by way of the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections. All said and done, the story of how Sri Lanka recovered from the worst economic crisis of its history has the ingredients of a Hitchcockian thriller.

President Wickremesinghe has done wonders but it is not clear whether he will be able to avoid the fate of a tragic hero. Perhaps, Pakistan, too, needs a tragic hero to put its economy on a permanent journey towards economic reforms and recovery. — Courtesy Dawn

How Lanka got her groove back

Are provinces autonomous?

Barrister Zamir Ghumro

In 1919, the British Indian government introduced a dichotomous system of governance. It divided the functions of the government into two categories: reserved and transferred subjects.

British officials were responsible for overseeing reserved subjects. While the second category (transferred) came under the control of Indians. Subsequently, concurrent lists were created, outlining the shared responsibilities of constituent units (the provinces of British India) and the centre.

After Partition, the Government of India Act, 1935 and the 1956 and 1973 constitutions of Pakistan continued this tradition.

The concurrent list was finally abolished through the 18th Amendment in 2010. Since then all powers are vested in provinces except those enumerated in the federal legislative list (Schedule 4). Only three subjects, the Pakistan Penal Code 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 and the Qanun-e-Shahadat Ordinance 1984 are com-

mon between the centre and provinces.

Policing and law and order are not enumerated in the federal list. They are solely provincial subjects. Despite this constitutional bar, the federal government has been controlling the police in the provinces since 1949. The perpetual inability of the provincial civil police forces to deliver services to people lies in this sordid dichotomy. It prevails due to the colonial mindset that is still intact in Islamabad.

Let us repeat, remind and reiterate: policing and law and order are provincial subjects, and parliament can only legislate on subjects enumerated in the federal legislative list. Article 142© of the constitution clearly stipulates that provincial assemblies shall and parliament shall not make laws on any subject not enumerated in the federal legislative list. There is no ambiguity whatsoever. Article 142© of the constitution unequivocally prohibits the federal government from creating or retaining control over a provincial police force.

Going against this mandate and in clear contravention of the constitu-

tion, the federal government refuses to give up control and insists on retaining the right to appoint the senior-most police officers of the provincial police force. This is against Article 137 of the constitution.

In 2023, while hearing suo-motu proceedings regarding the delay in the announcement of a date for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, SC Justice Mansoor Ali Shah held that "federation is based on the division of powers between the federal government and provinces, and both are independent and autonomous within their constitutional sphere."

The police station has an essential role in law and order. It is run by sub-inspectors and inspectors of the police service from the subordinate ranks of the provincial forces. The station house officer (SHO) legally possesses all the powers under the Criminal Procedure Code, 1898.

All other supervisory officers — superintendent of police (SP), senior superintendent police (SSP), deputy inspector general (DIG), additional inspector general (AIG) and inspector general (IG) — come un-

der the federal police service of Pakistan (PSP) and work in provinces on deputation. This is in contravention of the constitution.

These officers are answerable to the federal government, not the provincial governments. While the provincial governments can transfer or request the federal government to post officials guilty of misconduct elsewhere, they cannot take disciplinary action against them; they cannot suspend, remove or dismiss, downgrade or send officers on compulsory retirement even if there are strong cases of misconduct or other charges against them. Control through transfers is fluid and breeds corruption.

The performance (or lack thereof) of the police force is attributed to provincial governments. But how can provincial governments get the police forces under their domain to perform when all their senior officers are appointed by Islamabad?

The Sindh government spends a hefty amount of around Rs150 billion on policing. However, most police stations in the province present a dismal picture. These dilapidated buildings are run

by an understaffed, undertrained and overworked workforce and have no budgets of their own.

In contrast, supervisory officers of the PSP are wealthy, well-connected and resourceful. They have dedicated luxury cars, lavish offices and homes and hefty budgets and other attractive perks and privileges. All this at the cost of the provincial exchequer and no accountability to provincial authorities. The provincial home department and the provincial cabinet have virtually no control over them.

After Partition, both the Punjab border police and Sindh Rangers were merged under West Pakistan Rangers, through an ordinance adopted in 1959. This ordinance, being a provincial law, still regulates the Pakistan Rangers.

One unit was abolished in 1969, restoring the legitimate status of all four provinces. Fifty-five years later, the Islamabad mindset still insists on (unconstitutionally) retaining power and jurisdiction over the Sindh Rangers and with impunity.

While the Sindh gov-

ernment can neither appoint the inspector general (IG) in the province nor the DG Rangers, the responsibility for maintaining law and order rests with it. PSP officers work with the centre, thus undermining and dismantling the writ of the Sindh government.

The federal government, unconstitutionally and illegally, retains the two important and powerful functions of policing: issuing the formal orders of the transfer/posting of an IG officers and the retention of the PSP. The authority of police stations, instead of being exercised by people through their elected representatives of the province, has been usurped by police officers working under Islamabad's diktats. They follow Islamabad's political objectives at variance with provinces.

The ability to appoint top police officers needs to be devolved to the provinces immediately. The Sindh government is determined to restore peace and tranquillity in the province. The status quo is destroying Sindh's business environment and economy. — Courtesy TheNews

Tax with AI

Anwar Kashif Mumtaz

In December 2023, Pakistan's tax revenue reached \$17.079 billion, marking a significant increase from the previous figure of \$7.622bn reported in September 2023. Tax revenue data for Pakistan is updated on a quarterly basis, with an average of \$10.565bn recorded from September 2000 to December 2023, spanning 94 observations.

What is even more significant is that only 2.74 million individuals in Pakistan file personal income tax, representing merely 4.1 per cent of the labour force and 1.3pc of the total population. It is pertinent to mention that 35pc of these individual filers are exempt from paying income tax as their income falls below the taxable threshold, resulting in zero tax liability for the year. Between 2008 and 2021, Pakistan's federal government collected between 36pc to 39pc of its tax revenue from direct taxes, while the rest came from indirect taxes.

Expanding the tax net, equitable tax, restructuring the tax brackets, etc, have been part of conversations, but that is where such actions have stopped. We are still challenged by the small community of taxpayers, overburdened salaried class and large fields of agriculture and real estate being exempted. We have the super-impressive examples of Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea — economies that have risen on the basis of solid monetary policies, with far fewer resources.

Tax audits in Pakistan have long been associated with compromise, connivance, and rampant corruption. This pervasive culture not only undermines the integrity of the tax system but also perpetuates tax evasion, depriving the government

of much-needed revenue. The discretionary powers wielded by tax officers further exacerbate the problem, raising concerns about their potential for abuse. The complexity of tax laws often hampers the effective enforcement of tax regulations, allowing for loopholes to be exploited.

Pakistan's population number goes in its favour. Imagine crowd-funding by 240m people. Imagine 50pc of the population paying taxes — Pakistan becomes the golden goose. This argument compels us to look for the quickest, and most effective transformative solution that can restore faith in the tax system and ensure compliance with the law — artificial intelligence (AI), a game changer in the realm of tax audits.

AI is not a mechanical way replacing human error, but a made-to-order algorithm that can cater to and adapt to all local frameworks with optimisation of service, transparency, and above all, accessibility. Smartphone penetration which is currently around 31pc needs to be supported to take it up to 100pc and then to use that platform for reaching out to the banked and unbanked, documented and undocumented, in order to bring them on board.

Unlike human auditors, AI operates without bias or influence. It adheres strictly to the provisions of the tax code, without succumbing to external pressures or considerations. By leveraging advanced algorithms and data analytics, AI can efficiently analyse vast amounts of financial data, identifying patterns and anomalies indicative of potential tax evasion.

This analytical prowess not only enhances the effectiveness of audits but also serves as a powerful deterrent against non-com-

pliance. AI-driven audits prioritise transparency and accountability. Every decision made by the AI system is based on objective criteria, devoid of any subjective judgement or favouritism. This not only minimises the risk of corruption but also ensures fair and equitable treatment for all taxpayers.

Moreover, AI facilitates the simplification of tax laws by streamlining complex regulations into easily understandable guidelines. This not only reduces ambiguity but also empowers taxpayers to fulfil their obligations with confidence and clarity. Critically, AI-driven audits shift the focus from mere revenue generation to long-term deterrence of tax evasion. By identifying irregularities and enforcing compliance, AI helps create a culture of accountability and integrity within the tax system.

Additionally, AI improves data management by automating data ingestion, extraction, and organisation, facilitating a 'no-touch tax return' concept, and enhancing audit processes.

This is the only route for us towards equitability of taxation in Pakistan. With the right mechanics, we can investigate the integration of AI into tax audits for the much-needed paradigm shift.

By eliminating the spectre of compromise and connivance, tax revenue can be enhanced in selected fields. AI can expand the tax net, instil trust and confidence in the tax system and foster a conducive environment for economic growth and development.

As we embrace the transformative potential of AI, we pave the way for a fairer, more efficient, and more equitable tax regime for all. — Courtesy Dawn

The aging empire

Zarrar Khuhro

It's doublespeak that would have George Orwell slit his wrists with a sharpened quill: right after casting a veto against a draft resolution that recommended granting the state of Palestine full membership in the UN, the US ambassador said: "This vote does not reflect opposition to Palestinian statehood." If we are to actually believe the words coming out of the envoy's mouth it would mean that America just voted 'no' on something it claims to strongly support.

The US vetoes anything that goes against Israeli interests, interests which it values more than its diplomatic standing, global stability, or even the welfare of its own citizens. Since 1945, it has used its veto to block 34 draft resolutions to protect Israel, with most of them calling for Israel to respect international laws or condemning it for displacing Palestinians and building settlements in occupied territories.

The US also used its veto to block 46 resolutions on Israel. The first instance was in 1972 when it vetoed a resolution regarding Israeli air raids in Syria and Lebanon. Interestingly, this was the second-ever use of the veto by the US with the first being in 1970 to protect Britain from condemnation for not using force to overthrow the white supremacist regime of Rhodesia. Funny how history always comes more or less full circle.

Meanwhile, the US House of Representatives voted in a resolution condemning the chant "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", as antisemitic and presumably a call for genocide, all the while funding and supporting an actual genocide in Gaza.

Speaking of

antisemitism, the US Congress also conducted a hearing about how the hallowed halls of Columbia University have become hotbeds of hatred. Congressmen and women lined up to prove their allegiance to Israel by grilling the university administration on the measures taken to tackle antisemitism on campus.

Representative Rick Allen, in a fascinating display of the brain rot that Christian Zionism can cause, quoted Bible verses from Genesis 12:3, "If you bless Israel, I will bless you. If you curse Israel, I will curse you", before asking the Columbia president if she wanted her university to "be cursed by God".

It was a bit much given that Columbia has gone out of its way to support Zionist students and staff, while clamping down on pro-Palestinian voices. In a move that, had it taken place in any other country would have invited immediate condemnation from the US, Columbia suspended protesting students en masse and had them arrested by the NYPD. The suspended students included the daughter of US Congressman Ilhan Omar, just a day after Omar had questioned the Columbia administration about its treatment of pro-Palestinian voices. With every such action, the number of Americans opposed to Israel only grows.

Disquiet is increasing in Israel itself since the myth of Israeli invincibility was shattered first by Hamas and now by Iran. After Oct 7, the assurance that Israelis felt about being secure and separate from the Palestinians, caged as they were behind heavily guarded walls, brutalised as they were by a highly armed military, surveilled as they were by an infallible intelligence appara-

tus aided by the most cutting-edge technology available, all vanished like mist in the breeze.

With Iran's retaliation, the confidence Israelis had in the impermeability of their air defences which, in their imagination, allowed them to strike outwards with impunity and with no fear of payback, has also been punctured.

Israel claims to have intercepted the majority of the drones and missiles fired from Iran, but the fact is that most of these were intercepted by the US, UK, France and Jordan. Israel also points to the relatively little damage caused by the strikes as evidence of failure, but the very fact that the Nevatim airbase, from which the US-supplied F-35 jets operate, was hit several times should come as a shock to the Zionist regime, given that this is, without doubt, the most highly defended military base in all of Israel. Not only is the best of Israel's air defence deployed here, the base is also home to an US-supplied radar system as the TPY 2 X-band radar system, which is arguably the most advanced radar system the US has in its arsenal.

Less publicised were the drone attacks Hezbollah carried out on Israel during this time, penetrating deep into northern Israel and wounding dozens of Israeli soldiers, thus delivering the message that in any serious confrontation, it would rain down fire on large parts of Israel.

Perhaps this is why the Israeli riposte to Iran has so far been unimpressive, but no one should bet on Israel to show any restraint given the psychotic nature of its ruling class, military and public, and given that a decadent and decrepit empire will support them to the bitter end. — Courtesy Dawn

CM directs to launch strict action against purchase, sale of stolen goods to control street crime

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has directed to take measures to monitor the sale of stolen or snatched mobile phones and vehicles as spare parts or in their complete form in the markets of Karachi.

Chairing the 31st Apex Committee meeting here Monday, the chief minister said that police pickets would be established to strengthen the left bank of the River Indus and contain the dacoits within the katcha area. The recovery of

ransom from the families of the kidnapped individuals will be considered terror financing and the people involved in facilitating the collection of the ransom amount would be identified through intelligence work to crush them," the CM said.

The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by provincial Minister Information Sharjeel Memon, Home Minister Zia Lanjar, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Corps Commander Karachi Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar, Chief Secretary

Asif Hyder Shah, DG Ranger Major General Azhar Waqas, PSCM Agha Wasif, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Advocate General Hassan Akbar, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Adil IGP Karachi Imran Yakoob, Chief Custom Collector Mohammad Yakoob Mako, Water Board Chief Officers Asadullah Khan and other concerned officers.

The Home Minister Zia Lanjar and IGP Ghulam Nabi Memon briefing the

meeting said that street crime particularly mobile snatching and four-wheeler and two-wheeler theft has decreased due to improved policing, however, the cases of four and two-wheeler snatching has shown slight increase.

Comparative figures for the first three months (January to April) of 2023 and 2024 indicate a decrease in the number of theft cases reported. In 2024, 15,345 two-wheelers were stolen which is 953 cases less than the 16,298 incidents reported in 2023. Similarly,



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over the 30th APEX Committee meeting, held at CM House in Karachi.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health and Emergency Services Punjab Khawaja Salman Rafique addressing the participants of 6th VCs, Principals and MSs conference.

Maryam inaugurates virtual women police station in PSCA

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated the Pakistan's first virtual women police station "Meri Awaz... Maryam Nawaz" in Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA), here on Monday.

The CM said that women will not have to go round the police station unnecessarily, adding that the virtual women police station will guide women through all stages of the crime, from registration of FIR to its investigation and trial. The CM said that women can contact police through 15 Call, Women Safety App live chat feature, video call feature, Punjab Police App and Safe

City web portal. She highlighted that in the virtual women police station, all problems faced by women including harassment will be solved on priority basis.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif explained that in virtual women police station, a woman can share her problem with complete privacy and confidence without revealing her name and address, adding that live video call feature has also been introduced in the virtual police station. Women can also point out their problems including their location through the video call feature, she informed. IT graduate women

communication officers have been posted in the virtual women police station to facilitate women complainants, she said.

On special instructions of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, 100 modern emergency panic 15 buttons have also been installed in Lahore. The CM said panic buttons installed in universities and colleges, markets, intersections and bazaars can be connected to Safe City immediately by pressing them. She added complaint mechanism against crimes, police officers and officials on IG 1787 has also been made operational.

'No to Plastic' campaign launched to combat pollution: Marriyum

LAHORE (APP): Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb has said the Punjab government has initiated a comprehensive effort to combat pollution and enhance environmental quality. In a statement on Earth Day, she said, "Today marks the launch of the 'No to Plastic' campaign with a complete ban on plastic bag usage slated for June 5 to foster a cleaner environment."



PESHAWAR: Provincial President PML-Q Intikhab Khan Chamkani meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

Punjab govt working to improve people's quality of life: Minister

SIALKOT (APP): Provincial Minister for Local Government Zeeshan Rafique has said that the provincial cabinet under the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is working day and night to improve the quality of life of the people of the province and fruitful results have started appearing in the form of reduction in the prices of flour and bread (roti) and the provision of best municipal services in urban and rural areas.

Addressing a reception at Bhaif of his constituency PP-51, he said the Punjab government was promoting the politics

prepared. "Modern machinery is being provided to farmers to address crop residue burning, while the ban on plastic bags aims to eliminate smog and protect public health from diseases such as lung cancer," she added and emphasized ongoing efforts to reduce industrial pollution, carbon emissions and deploy modern technology to purify the air.

She expressed confidence that with the initiatives spearheaded by the CM, Punjab would set a shining example of environmental stewardship in the coming years.

Three judges of PHC take oath

PESHAWAR (APP): Three judges of Peshawar High Court including Justice Khurshid Iqbal, Justice Fazal Subhan and Justice Shahid Khan on Monday took oath as permanent judges of the court.

Chief Justice PHC Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim administered oath to the three judges.

SSP says: One arrested in injured condition after encounter with police

LARKANA (APP): Larkana Police has conducted a targeted operation against the criminals in Khakrani and Jeeha areas here Monday. The Rashid Wagan police force, led by SSP Larkana Mir Rohal Khan Khoso supported by police mobiles and armored vehicles participated in the operation.

SSP Larkana said that no stone would be left unturned to bring the perpetrators to justice and those who interfere with peace. He said the police destroyed all their hideouts and the criminals will soon be apprehended. He said that during the encounter, an outlaw was arrested in injured condition by recovering a pistol from him.

The SSP said that during patrolling of Taluka Police station, another member of robbers gag was arrested at Hyder Shah Road and recovered from him one pistol after encounter with his gang members.

Punjab Governor says: PAS has important role in running the country's admin affairs, development

Independent Report

LAHORE: A delegation comprising participants of 47th Specialized Training Program and the first Specialized Training Course called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman. The delegation was led by Director Civil Services Academy Dr. Sajid Mahmood Chauhan. Governor Punjab welcomed the delegation to Governor House Lahore and informed them about the history of Governor House.

Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that Pakistan Administrative Service has an important role in running the country's administrative affairs and development. He said that civil servants should serve the people. He said that while performing their professional responsibilities, they should strive for the welfare and betterment of general public. He said that success depends not only on individual abilities and resources, but also on how effectively these resources are used. Governor Punjab said that in today's modern

era, it is very important to embrace technology and innovation.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman further said that the government is currently focused on reducing poverty, creating employment opportunities, ensuring equal opportunities for economic development through social and infrastructure development. He said that the government's aim to increase the productivity and investment of every individual by modeling an efficient, responsive and service-oriented governance. Governor Punjab while expressing his best wishes for the officers under training expressed the hope that they will contribute to development of the country with their unwavering dedication and determination.

Earlier, the head of the delegation, Director Civil Services Academy Dr. Sajid Mahmood Chauhan gave detailed information about the aims and objectives of the Specialized Training Program and the Specialized Training Course.

CM emphasizes completion of tourism-related projects, activities on emergency basis

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism Culture, and Archeology, Zahid Chanzeb has stressed on the urgent completion of tourism activities and projects to achieve 100 percent set goals for the development of tourism.

He indicated that the government would evaluate the performance of the departments based on the achievement of the targets and would release funds as per the performance.

LHC announces holiday on Tuesday

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) announced a public holiday on Tuesday in Lahore in view of the visit of foreign dignitaries and to thereby avoid the consequent inconvenience to the general public. A notification issued by the deputy registrar states that the chief justice declared April 23rd (Tuesday) as a local holiday for the LHC principal seat, civil, and sessions courts of Lahore district.

adding that the institutions with perform would be strongly encouraged and funded. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting of Kagan Development Authority (KDA) at Pakhtunkhwa, said a press release issued here Monday. The Tourism Adviser issued clear instructions to the KDA to take concrete steps to develop tourism in the area and provide more facilities to tourists. He said that the development strategy should include provision of quality services in hotels

and restaurants, washrooms and drinking water to tourists at the spots as well as on the sides of the highways at a suitable distance. He said that the owners of the local hotels and restaurants should be asked to manage the facilities on road side.

He said the provincial government and the Department of Tourism and Culture were committed to promoting tourism on a solid basis throughout the province and working on a five-year.



KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari presenting shield to Corps Commander Karachi Lieutenant General Babar Iftikhar.

WHO representative for Pakistan meets Health Minister

Independent Report

PESHAWAR: The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) for Pakistan, Mr. Lou De Peng, held a meeting with the Minister Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, on Monday.

During the meeting, Mr. Lou De Peng engaged in bilateral discussions with the health minister on various issues. Dr. Shaukat Ali, Director-General of Health Services, briefed both entities on the current health initiatives. In a significant gesture, the WHO representative presented two cold chain trucks to the health minister for the efficient distribution of vaccines, ensuring their effectiveness.

Additionally, Mr. Lou De Peng donated 1400 Android mobile phones and 840 Android tablets to facilitate data sharing among the frontline workers of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) in the merged districts of the province.

Furthermore, in response to the recent floods, the WHO representative handed over medicines worth 3.6 million to the Minister Health to aid in emergency response efforts.

Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah expressed gratitude for Mr. Lou De Peng's visit to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and thanked the WHO for its continuous support during challenging times. He also appreciated the WHO's Pakhtunkhwa office.



KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Excise and Taxation, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon along with others cut ribbon during inauguration ceremony the Pink Peoples Bus Service, held in Karachi.

Minister reviews projects of Food Safety and Halal Food Authority

Independent Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru on Monday presided over a comprehensive review meeting regarding the performance and ongoing projects of Food Safety and Halal Food Authority.

The minister emphasized ensuring the supply of quality and adulteration-free food products to citizens in the markets and directed the relevant officials to take necessary steps in this regard.

Zahir Shah highlighted that the provincial government was taking priority actions to enhance the capacity of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority.

The minister extended that seven mobile food testing laboratories were working in the fields

and soon five more mobile food labs along with a state-of-the-art lab soon would be inaugurated.

During the briefing, Director General of the Food Authority, Wasif Saeed, along with Director Administration Ishtiaq Khan and Director Technical Dr Abdul Sattar Shah, provided detailed updates on the authority's performance and ongoing projects. Saeed mentioned that the work on the state-of-the-art lab is in its final stages and the procurement of five more mobile food testing labs has been also completed, which will soon facilitate on-site testing of food items.

The minister was informed that food safety teams are operating in 21 districts of the province, with plans to expand six more districts including merged districts.

Chaos party coming to an end: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said on Monday that yesterday in by-polls the people of Punjab had once again rejected the agenda of unrest.

Talking to media here, she said, "It is a wrong impression that governments win by elections and the fact is that people only vote to those parties which deliver."

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was habitual of making hue and cry whether they win or not, she said and added that chaos party was coming to an end.

She said that soon Punjab CM would give a comprehensive plan for farmers.

Azma said how unfortunate it was that Moonis Elahi could see rigging while sitting in Spain but could not see misery of his father.



LAHORE: A delegation comprising participants of 47th Specialized Training Program and the first Specialized Training Course called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Minister Prisons, Work and Service Department, Ali Hassan Zardari chairs meeting to review development projects.

29th Intl Mushaira good omen for Karachi: Murtaza

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that hosting the 29th International Mushaira was a good omen for the city which will promote the academic and literary interest of the citizens and promote constructive and positive thinking, cultural and literary activities have been the tradition of this city. He said this on participating in the 29th International Mushaira held at the Expo Centre Karachi, said a statement on Monday.

He said that the citizens of Karachi have

always shown their full support and encouragement, as a nation, we must maintain our vibrant traditions so that future generations can also benefit from them. Through international exhibitions and literary events, Karachi continues to prove itself as a rich land of cultural and literary credibility, he said.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, eminent poet Iftikhar Arif, Professor Sahar Ansari, Dr. Pirzada Qasim.

Pak backs UN's FAO in forming a facility to ensure food security

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has told the just-concluded UN Economic and Social (ECOSOC) Youth Forum that it supports the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in creating a facility with broader and people-centric criteria to further strengthen its efforts to defeat hunger, improve nutrition and food security in the developing countries. "We have considerable potential in the agriculture sector and could play an important role in building the global food supply chains," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan,

said at the forum attended by over 1,000 youth leaders and activists from around the world.

At the same time, he extended Pakistan's support to the UN Secretary-General's call for urgent reform of the global financial system, notably how to approach debt relief on behalf of the billions of distressed citizens living in the developing world, saying it was critical for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2) to end world hunger.

Ambassador Jadoon also underscored the need for concerted international

efforts to establish resilient and sustainable food systems that can withstand shocks and disruptions in light of the increasing vulnerability of global food systems to a multitude of challenges.

He warned that the world was facing a convergence of crises, from conflicts to climate change, and from supply chain disruptions to economic contractions, which posed significant threats to the ability of existing food systems to provide nutritious, safe, and affordable diets for all.

The Pakistani envoy said that as the fifth most populous

country in the world with a significant youthful population, Pakistan recognized the critical importance of safeguarding food systems for future generations. Agriculture, he said, was the backbone of the country's economy, contributing substantially to its GDP and employing a significant portion of its labour force. Ambassador Usman Jadoon referred to Pakistan's 2022 devastating floods, which destroyed 4.4 million acres of standing crops, and said that the catastrophe led to a stark realization of the extreme vulnerability of food systems.



DUBAI: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in a Meeting with Senior Officials of Mashreq Bank and First Abu Dhabi Bank.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson BISP, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib witnessed MoU signing ceremony between BISP and NAVTTC to extend access to technical and vocational education to members of BISP beneficiary families at BISP HQs on 22nd April 2024. Ms. Saira Atta, Director General (CI) from BISP and Mr. Shafiq Khokhar, Director General (P&D) from NAVTTC formally signed the agreement.

Qaiser outlines plans for govt institutions enhancement, shipping industry regulation

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh on Monday affirmed plans to enhance the performance of government bodies and consider privatization where deemed necessary.

Speaking to the media persons at the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) office, he clarified that there were no ongoing discussions regarding the privatization of PNSC.

Stressing the need for

collective efforts to stabilize the economy and elevate the performance of government institutions, the minister expressed concerns about the PNSC oil ship stranded in Sri Lanka for eight months due to technical issues.

He assured an inquiry into the matter and pledged strict action against responsible officials.

Furthermore, he announced the imminent appointment of a Chairman for PNSC and emphasized the importance

of hiring a CEO from the open market for the corporation.

Highlighting efforts to render all government institutions profitable, he cited Karachi Port Trust (KPT) as an example, stating it had generated approximately Rs 2 billion in profit, with a target of Rs 5 billion for the current year. Responding to queries, the minister indicated plans for a comprehensive meeting to deliberate on regulating the shipping industry.

MoU inked to provide skill based training to BISP beneficiaries' family members

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) here on Monday to provide high quality technical and vocational education to the BISP beneficiaries' family members.

The primary objective of the MoU was to establish a robust framework for cooperation between NAVTTC and BISP in executing the Skills Training Vouchers Programme.

This initiative was

specifically designed to extend access to high-quality technical and vocational education to members of BISP beneficiary families.

The signing ceremony was graced by the presence of distinguished personalities, including Chairperson BISP, Dr Muhammad Amjad Saqib, who witnessed the historic moment. Representing BISP, Ms Saira Atta, Director General (CI), and from NAVTTC, Shafiq Khokhar, Director General (P&D), formally inked the agreement, symbolizing a commitment to mutual cooperation and shared objectives.

Finance Minister meets officials of banking sector in Dubai

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb held meeting with the senior officials of Mashreq Bank and First Abu Dhabi Bank in Dubai on Monday to discuss strengthening of financial and economic cooperation.

During the meeting, the minister emphasized upon the bankers to reconsider their appetite for arranging finance for the country given significant improvements in economic fundamentals, said a press release issued here.

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 523 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 523.56 points, a positive change of 0.74 percent, closing at 71,433.46 points against 70,909.90 points the previous trading day.

A total of 655,205,105 shares valuing Rs.31.248 billion were traded during the day as compared to 475,833,699 shares valuing Rs.23,220 billion the last day. Some 389 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 217 of them recorded gains and 140 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 32 remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Habib Bank with 48,145,538 shares.

NPO, APO collaborate to enhance Paki gemstone Industry through international standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Productivity Organization (NPO), Pakistan in collaboration with Asian Productivity Organization (APO), Japan is organizing an International Workshop on value addition of gemstone products for compliance with international standards from 22nd to 25th April 2024 here on Monday.

The said workshop is attended by 18 overseas participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam from APO member countries. 11 local participants and sessions will be delivered by the international resource speakers from Thailand.

The main objective of this program is to review

international standards on gemstone products, to provide comprehensive knowledge of cutting, polishing, designing and heating techniques, and to enhance understanding of best practices and technological advances in gemstone value chains including manufacturing, standardization and trading.

Chief Guest Mr. Wasem Ajmal Chaudhry, Federal Secretary Industries & Production and APO director for Pakistan in his opening remarks on a four day International workshop on value addition of gemstone products for compliance with international standards appreciated the APO's role in the development of Asia-Pacific region.

Pakistan Trade, Investment Symposium held in China

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalid Hashmi attended the Pakistan Trade and Investment Symposium held in Linyi in Shandong, a thriving city of trade in small goods.

The symposium was organized by the Linyi Municipal Government and other departments.

Addressing the participants, the Ambassador briefed them about investment policies, incentives, institutional support merits of Special

Economic Zones (SEZs) and other investment facilitation schemes in Pakistan. Ambassador Hashmi visited the Linyi city and held meeting with municipal leadership.

During the meeting, the two sides decided to enhance trade and investment relations and business to business exchanges. Glad to visit Linyi in Shandong, a thriving city of trade in small goods, 125 wholesale markets, 39 logistic parks and 55 e-commerce parks.



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari presenting Chamber's shield to prominent Pakistani American businessman and Chairman Falcon Holding Texas, United States Aslam Khan. Zubair Ahmad Malik, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari, Malik Nadeem Akhtar, Assad Aziz, Khalid Ch.Ch. Mohammad Ali and other are also present.

PSX collaborates with London Stock Exchange Group on ESG

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark development, Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has signed a collaborative understanding with LSEG (London Stock Exchange Group) on Environment, Social and Governance (ESG).

Under this mutual understanding, both companies will work to develop a suite of standardized ESG data tools that can be used by PSX listed companies for their ESG data reporting, according to PSX press statement received here.

This understanding benefits PSX and listed companies in that the platform would not only provide ESG scoring but also enhance the visibility of Pakistani companies on the international ESG radars, it said adding the arrangement would also help lay down the groundwork for an ESG Index planned by the PSX in the future.

Aligned with PSX's

vision on ESG, this development is a major link in the chain of steps taken by the Exchange in its ESG journey. Through this collaboration, PSX lays down the groundwork to encourage listed companies in adopting ESG reporting in line with global standards.

Moreover, it augments the step taken by PSX in the shape of the ESG Taskforce established along with key stakeholders to bolster the adoption of ESG standards by listed companies. In the near future, PSX also plans to hold training sessions in collaboration with LSEG to create the necessary awareness and build capacity for listed companies on ESG reporting. Speaking on the signing of the mutual understanding with LSEG, MD & CEO PSX, Farrukh H. Khan said that the understanding makes available a comprehensive suite of services that would be offered by PSX.

IFL scheme continues to serve underprivileged class

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

The Interest Free Loan Programme is a flagship initiative of the government designed and implemented by the PPAF and is strategically aimed at promoting financial inclusion as a means of reducing poverty by providing interest-free loans to impoverished households in more than

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

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

"My husband is suffering from serious health issues and my son helps his father arrange

pottery in the shop before going to school and take care of the business after school, allowing his father to rest", she said.

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

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

OEC to export medical experts to Qatar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) an attached department of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development would send its well-trained workforce of Pediatric and Geriatric nurses to a Qatari medical firm during the current fiscal year. According to the advertisement of OEC, Tabeer Care Medical Services required nursing staff in the field of Pediatric and Geriatric from Pakistan, which enabled a good employment opportunity for candidates with relevant qualifications and experience.

As per the requirement of a job below 40 years of age.



ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Economic Affairs cordially extends a gracious welcome to the esteemed Chinese delegation, under the leadership of His Excellency Lou Zhaohai, Chairman of the Chinese International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), upon their visit to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Chairman FBR holds E-Kachehri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana held E-Kachehri at FBR Headquarters on Monday to listen to the issues of taxpayers and provide prompt assistance.

The E-Kachehri provides a platform to taxpayers to appraise their concerns directly to Chairman FBR and also give their suggestions regarding tax-related issues and matters, said a press release issued here on Monday. During the Kachehri, the chairman directly received telephone calls from taxpayers and listened to their grievances and recommendation.

Chairman FBR gave

on-spot directions to relevant offices to promptly resolve issues of the taxpayers. He also appreciated the suggestions given by some taxpayers and assured them that their valued input would be duly considered. He reiterated that FBR was taking all possible measures to facilitate the taxpayers by ensuring timely provision of services and promote tax culture and compliance across the country. E-Kachehri by Chairman FBR provides an opportunity to taxpayers to directly communicate with the Chairman for redressal of their grievances and also helps keep a check on the performance of the Field Formations.



QUETTA: Kissan Ittehad Central Chairman, Khalid Hussain along with others addresses to media persons during press conference held at Quetta press club.

CDNS achieves Rs 1250 billion targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 1250 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to April 19.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Monday.

He said this was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for

the previous financial year 2021-22. "The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said. Given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations.



ISLAMABAD: Labourer Carrying Bananas on cart at Fruit Market.

Greek and Turkish delegations meet in Athens as part of efforts to improve often strained ties

Monitoring Desk
ATHENS: Delegations from Greece and Turkey were meeting in Athens on Monday as part of long-standing efforts to improve often tense relations between the two neighbors, days after Turkey voiced objections over Greece's plans to create marine nature reserves in the Ionian and Aegean seas.

The two regional rivals are NATO allies but have been at odds for decades over a series of issues, including territorial claims in the Aegean and drilling rights in the Mediterranean, and have come to the brink of war three times in the last 50 years. A dispute over energy exploration rights in 2020 led to the two countries' warships facing off in the Mediterranean.

Monday's meeting in Athens was to discuss confidence-building measures,

following a similar meeting in Ankara last November. The two countries have engaged in the confidence-building process on and off for years, trying to seek common ground on a series of lower-key issues as a means of improving ties.

The meeting comes ahead of planned talks in Ankara on May 13 between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Tense ties have improved significantly over the past year, with Erdogan visiting Athens in December and signing a raft of trade, energy and education deals.

But Mitsotakis' announcement last week that Greece will create two marine parks for the protection of sea mammals and birds — one in the Ionian Sea in western Greece and one in the central Aegean — has angered Turkey.

Omer Celik, spokesman for Erdogan's ruling party, said last week that Ankara considers the creation of the marine parks "a step that sabotages the normalization process" in relations, and said Turkey would "in no way allow actions toward the declaration of marine parks in the Aegean Sea."

Mitsotakis, speaking last week after a meeting of European leaders in Brussels, expressed surprise at what he described as "Turkey's totally unjustified reaction to an initiative which at the end of the day is of an environmental nature."

The Greek prime minister said the recent improvement in relations between Greece and Turkey was "undeniable and measurable," but that this did not mean Turkey had changed its positions on the delineation of maritime zones in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean.



A grieving woman is consoled by a man after the body of her relative was discovered, buried by Israeli forces in a mass grave in the Nasser hospital compound in Khan Younis.

50 more bodies found at hospital in Gaza's Khan Younis

Monitoring Desk
GAZA: Health workers have uncovered at least 50 bodies of people killed and buried by Israeli forces at a hospital, in the southern city of Khan Younis.

But while Israeli military said it was checking reports about the recovery of 50 bodies, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared far from being willing to respect the United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire, saying he would fight against sanctions being imposed on any Israeli army units.

Israel's invasion has so far killed 34,097 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry.

Separately, the Palestinian Red Crescent said on Saturday that at least 14 people were killed

during an Israeli raid on a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli army said it killed 10 people during the operation at Nur Shams camp. "Inside the Nasser Medical Complex there are mass graves dug by the Israeli occupation... we were shocked by the presence of bodies of 50 martyrs in one of the pits yesterday," said Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the Gaza civil defence agency.

"We are continuing the search operation today and are waiting for all graves to be exhumed in order to give a final number of martyrs." He said some of those killed had been tortured. "There were no clothes on some bodies, which certainly indicates (the victims) faced torture and abuse," Mr Bassal said.

Iran says nuclear weapons have no place in its nuclear doctrine

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's nuclear doctrine, the country's foreign ministry said on Monday, days after a Revolutionary Guards commander warned that Tehran might change its nuclear policy if pressured by Israeli threats.

"Iran has repeatedly said its nuclear programme only serves peaceful purposes. Nuclear weapons have no place in our nuclear doctrine," ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said

during a press conference in Tehran.

Following a spike in tensions with Israel, the Guards commander in charge of nuclear security Ahmad Haghtalab said last week that Israeli threats could push Tehran to "review its nuclear doctrine and deviate from its previous considerations."

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the last say on Tehran's nuclear programme.

West Bank camp mourns Palestinians killed in Israeli raid

Monitoring Desk
TULKAREM: Families kissed the faces of the dead and neighbours cried in the streets after one of the worst Israeli raids anyone in the Nur Shams refugee camp can remember. On Sunday a funeral procession for 13 Palestinians killed in the army's West Bank operation passed through roads piled with rubble from Israeli bulldozers and rocket fire. Israeli forces carry out regular raids on towns and cities in the occupied West Bank.

Ukraine says it damaged Russian rescue ship in Crimea

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukraine's military said on Sunday it had struck and damaged a long-serving Russian rescue vessel in Sevastopol, the headquarters in occupied Crimea of Moscow's Black Sea Fleet.

Navy spokesperson Dmytro Pletenchuk said the vessel, the Kommuna, had been hit in Sevastopol Bay on Sunday morning and it was "clear that the ship is no longer in a state to carry out assignments." A post on the Ukrainian Armed Forces Telegram channel said the ship was one of the oldest operated by the Russian navy.

Poland's prime minister celebrates after his party wins a string of cities in mayoral votes

Monitoring Desk
WARSAW: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk expressed satisfaction on Monday after a series of candidates supported by his party won weekend races for mayor.

Candidates from his pro-European Union centrist Civic Coalition, or running with the party's backing, won in a series of cities in the second round of local elections held on Sunday, among them Krakow, Poznan, Wroclaw and Rzeszow.

"It is very difficult to

clearly say who won and who lost," Tusk said Monday. "But if we compare these results, especially in the most attractive places, on these attractive battlefields... then I actually have reasons for satisfaction."

"Law and Justice has simply disappeared in many places," Tusk added at a news conference, referring to the main opposition party. The results put Civic Coalition in a favorable position as the country looks next to elections to the European Parliament on June 9.



Officials count votes during the parliamentary elections, at a polling station in Maldives's capital Male.

Landslide win for pro-China leader's party in Maldives vote

Monitoring Desk
MALE: The party of Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu won control of parliament in a Sunday election landslide, results showed, with voters backing his tilt towards China and away from regional powerhouse and traditional benefactor India.

Muizzu's People's National Congress (PNC) won 66 of the first 86 seats declared, according to the Elections Commission of Maldives results, already more than enough for a super-majority in the 93-member majlis, or parliament.

The vote was seen as a crucial test for Muizzu's plan to press ahead with closer economic cooperation with China.

The PNC and its allies had only eight seats in the outgoing parliament,

with the lack of a majority stymieing Muizzu after his presidential election victory in September.

The main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) — which had previously had a super-majority of its own — was headed for a humiliating defeat with just a dozen seats.

Muizzu, 45, had been among the first to vote on Sunday, casting his ballot at a school in the capital Male — where he was previously mayor — and urging Maldivians to turn out in high numbers. "All citizens should come out and exercise their right to vote as soon as possible," Muizzu told reporters.

The Maldives — a low-lying nation of some 1,192 tiny coral islands scattered some 800kms across the equator.

First Iran group in nine years heads to Saudi Arabia for Umrah pilgrimage

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: The first group of Iranian pilgrims in nine years made its way to Saudi Arabia on Monday for the Umrah, or minor pilgrimage, Iran's official news agency reported, as a result of improving ties between the two Middle Eastern powers.

Iranian media had said in December that Saudi Arabia had lifted restrictions on Iranians wanting to perform Umrah but flights were delayed until now due to what Tehran called "technical problems".

In March 2023, China mediated an agreement under which Iran and Saudi Arabia restored full diplomatic relations that were cut since 2016 over Riyadh's execution of a Shi'ite Muslim cleric and the subsequent storming of the Saudi embassy in Tehran.



NEGOMBO: Catholic nuns carry photos as they pay tribute to the victims killed in the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings at Katuwapiya St. Sebastian's Church.

China opposes Japan prime minister's offering at Yasukuni shrine

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China expressed strong opposition on Monday to a ritual offering made by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at a controversial shrine in Tokyo that China and South Korea view as a symbol of Japan's former military aggression.

Kishida made a bonsai offering at the Yasukuni Shrine on Sunday, Japanese media said, showing live footage of a wooden plaque with the words "Prime Minister Fumio Kishida" attached to the offering, and other cabinet members also made offerings.

"The Yasukuni shrine is dedicated to 14 Class-A

war criminals who were seriously responsible for the aggressive war," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in reply to a query at a regular press briefing. The shrine is seen by Beijing and Seoul as a symbol of Japan's past military aggression because it includes Japanese wartime leaders convicted as war criminals by an Allied tribunal. "The Chinese side firmly opposes Japan's negative moves about the Yasukuni shrine. The Chinese foreign ministry and the Chinese embassy in Japan have made solemn statements to Japan, respectively," Wang added.

Doctors cite unmedicated mental illness in Sydney attack

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY: No one can know the mind of Sydney shopping mall killer Joel Cauchi, but psychiatrists say one underlying cause of his rampage is evident: he had schizophrenia, stopped his medication and fell out of treatment.

People have searched for a fathomable motive since the April 13 knife attack at Bondi Junction, in which five women and a male security guard were stabbed to death and another dozen wounded, including a nine-month-old girl. Cauchi's parents have said their son was diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of 17 and was successfully treated for about 18 years.

Southern China storms kill four, force mass evacuations

Monitoring Desk
GUANGDONG: Four people are dead and 10 others missing following storms that battered southern China, state media said on Monday, with tens of thousands evacuated from areas hit by torrential downpours. Heavy rain has descended upon the vast southern province of Guangdong in recent days, swelling rivers and raising fears of severe flooding that state media said could be of the sort only "seen around once a century".

"Three deaths were reported in Zhaoqing City while the remaining one is a rescuer in Shaoguan City," state news agency Xinhua reported, citing local authorities.

Ten others remain missing as search and rescue efforts in the area continue to be carried out, said

Xinhua. China is no stranger to extreme weather but recent years have seen the country hit by severe floods, grinding droughts and record heat.

More than 110,000 people have been relocated across Guangdong, according to Xinhua.

Of those, more than 45,000 were evacuated from the northern city of Qingyuan, which straddles the banks of the Bei River, a tributary in the wider Pearl River Delta, state media reported on Sunday.

Heavy rain is expected to continue on Monday, with meteorological authorities forecasting "thunderstorms and strong winds in Guangdong's coastal waters" — a stretch of sea bordering major cities, including Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

UN pushes justice for Sri Lanka's Easter victims

Monitoring Desk
COLOMBO: The United Nations on Sunday urged Sri Lanka to bridge its "accountability deficit" and ensure justice as the country commemorated the 279 victims of its worst-ever attack against civilians five years ago.

The UN's top envoy to the country, Marc-Andre Franche, told a remembrance service in Colombo that there should be a "thorough and transparent investigation" to uncover those behind the Easter carnage in 2019. Bombers hit three churches and three hotels in the island's deadliest suicide attack aimed at civilians, but grieving families say they are still waiting for justice.

Indonesia court to rule on petitions seeking presidential election re-run

Monitoring Desk
JAKARTA: A court in Indonesia will on Monday deliver its verdict on two challenges to the outcome of February's presidential election, after losing candidates petitioned for a re-run and alleged the state had interfered in favour of winner Prabowo Subianto.

The two rivals of Defence Minister and former special forces commander Prabowo have both asked the Constitutional Court to disqualify him from a contest he won by a huge margin, arguing widespread distribution of social aid in key areas had swayed the vote in his favour.

Prabowo, who won 58% of the votes, has dismissed that as baseless.

Former governors Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo also alleged tacit support from the hugely popular President Joko Widodo had gifted Prabowo an unfair advantage, as did the inclusion of the outgoing leader's son as his running mate, owing to the same court's decision to change eligibility rules.

One killed in Kabul attack claimed by IS

Monitoring Desk
KABUL: One person was killed and three others were wounded in an explosion in Kabul, Afghan police said on Sunday, with the Islamic State group claiming responsibility for the sticky bomb attack. The improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated in the Kot-i-Sangi neighbourhood, near an enclave of the historically persecuted Shia Hazara community, which has been targeted by the militant group in the past. "The sticky bomb was planted on a minibus," Kabul police spokesperson Khalid Zadran said in a statement late on Saturday.

Rockets fired from northern Iraq target US-led coalition base in Syria

Monitoring Desk
DAMASCUS: Rockets were fired late Sunday from northern Iraq at a military base in Syria housing a US-led coalition, according to Iraqi security forces.

In response, the Iraqi forces launched a major search operation in northern Nineveh province and found the vehicle used in the attack, they said in a statement.

It is the first major attack against the coalition forces in several weeks.

It comes days after Israel reportedly responded to an Iranian attack with a drone strike on the Islamic republic, amid tensions fuelled by the Gaza war.

The statement from the Iraqi security forces accused "outlaw elements of having targeted a base of the international coalition with rockets in the heart of Syrian territory", at around 9:50 pm (1850 GMT).

The security forces burned the vehicle involved

in the attack, the statement added.

Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor, said several rockets had been fired "from Iraqi territory at the Kharab al-Jir base" in northeast Syria, where US forces are stationed.

He accused the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, a loose alliance of Iran-backed groups, of staging the attack.

The group has claimed most of the attacks on US forces carried between mid-October and early February. Following a series of rocket attacks and drone strikes by pro-Iran armed factions against US soldiers deployed in the Middle East over the winter, there had been several weeks of calm. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has said it is acting in solidarity with Palestinians and out of anger at US support for Israel in the Gaza war.

Negotiations on global plastic treaty to resume in Canada

Monitoring Desk
OTTAWA: Negotiators from 175 countries are meeting from Tuesday in Canada to nail down a binding global treaty to end plastic pollution with many sticking points to be resolved five months after the last round of talks in Kenya.

Nations in 2022 agreed to finalize by the end of this year a world-first UN treaty to address the scourge of plastics found everywhere from mountain tops to ocean depths, and within human blood and breast milk.

Negotiators have already met three times and are expected, after the Ottawa talks, to hold a final round of negotiations in South Korea.

The previous meeting in Nairobi last November was the first opportunity to debate a draft treaty that outlined pathways to tackling the problem. It ended with disagreements over its scope and environmental non-governmental organizations panning a lack of firm progress.

"We have a text, it is a basis even if there re-

mains a lot of work to be done on it," Canadian Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault and host of the Ottawa talks told AFP.

According to him, the goal this round is to "achieve a text with 60 to 70 percent of the elements endorsed" by delegates who are meeting through April 29.

The stakes are high, with widespread plastic pollution having potentially grave impacts on oceans and climate.

Although there is a broad consensus on the need for a treaty, environmental activists pleading for a 75 percent cut in plastic production by 2040 are at odds with oil-producing nations and the plastics industry itself that favor recycling.

"This treaty presents a monumental opportunity in a time of urgency," said oceans scientist Neil Nathan of the University of California Santa Barbara.

"Legally binding and specific measures are necessary to avoid a watered-down agreement that fails to meet the moment."



A drone view shows roads submerged in floodwaters following heavy rainfall, in Qingyuan, Guangdong province, China.

Pakistan, Iran sign eight accords to strengthen bilateral cooperation in multiple sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday signed a total of eight accords on varying subjects to enhance cooperation in the different fields including trade, science technology, agriculture, health, culture, and judicial matters.

The documents were signed between the two countries on the occasion of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's three-day official visit to Pakistan.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President Raisi witnessed the ceremony as the representatives from both sides, signed the documents. The two countries signed an MoU on the Establishment of the Rimdand-Gab Joint Free/Special Zone. The memorandum was inked by Secretary Board of Investment Ambreen Iftikhar and Iranian Advisor to President and Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade Industrial and Special Economic Zones Hojjatollah Abdolmaleki.

The MoU on Mutual

Recognition of the Standard of Iran and Pakistan, was signed by Minister of Science and Technology Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrashi.

An MoU on Cooperation between the Ministry of Cooperative Labour and Social Welfare of Iran and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistani and Human Resources Development of Pakistan was also signed by Minister of Overseas Pakistani Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrashi.

Minister of Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarrar and Iranian Minister of Justice Amin Hossein Rahimi inked an agreement on Judicial Assistance in Civil Matters between Iran and Pakistan.

Pakistan and Iran also signed an Agreement of Cooperation on Animal Hygiene and Health. The document was signed by Minister of National Food

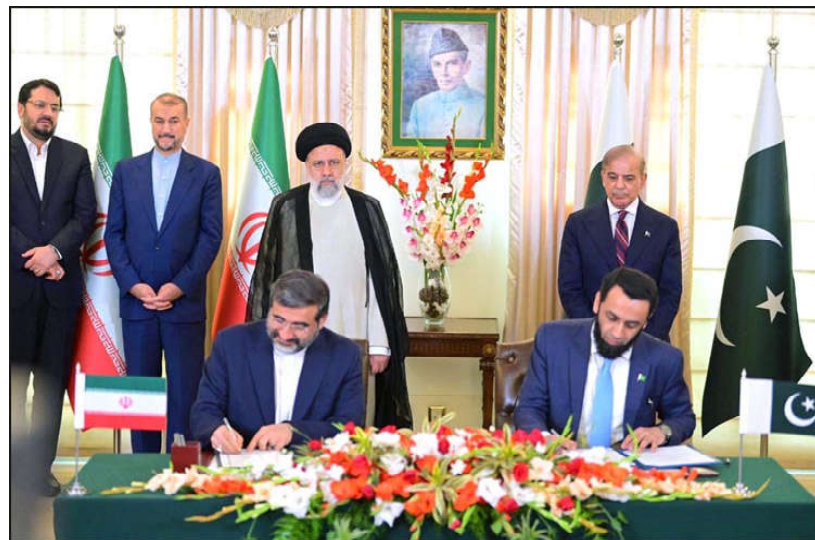
Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and Iranian Minister of Agriculture Jihad Mohammad Ali Nikbakht.

Similarly, the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) in the Field of Quarantine and Phytosanitary was also inked by Minister of National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and Iran's Minister of Agriculture Jihad Mohammad Ali Nikbakht.

The two sides also signed an MoU for Legal Cooperation between the Ministry of Justice of Iran and the Ministry of Law and Justice of Pakistan.

Minister of Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarrar and his Iranian counterpart Amin Hossein Rahimi signed the memorandum.

An MoU between the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of Pakistan and Organization of Cinema and Audiovisual Affairs of Iran was inked to promote film exchange and cinema cooperation between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Iran H.E. Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi witness signing of MoUs of cooperation in different fields between Iran and Pakistan.

Pakistan on track to secure new loan from IMF: FM

ISLAMABAD (INP): With macroeconomic factors shifting in Pakistan's favour, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Islamabad is on track to secure a new loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) — the Washington-based lender. In an interview with The National, the finance czar said: "The fund has been very receptive in terms of agreeing to consider a larger, longer programme." Pakistan has made a formal request to the IMF for another bailout package in the range of \$6 to \$8 billion under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing. However, the exact size and time-frame will only be determined after evolving consensus on the

major contours of the next programme in May 2024.

Aurangzeb told the Abu Dhabi-based publication that the macroeconomic factors are shifting in its favour as it works to boost its lagging economy. The rupee has finally stabilised, he said, adding that the inflation is on track to drop to single-digit levels by the end of next year. He further said that the cash-strapped nation would need at least three years of support to carry out a reform agenda across several sectors including taxation and energy.

Last week, the global lender's Middle East and Central Asia director said the IMF was ready to support Pakistan and the package of reforms is now more important than the size of the new programme.

NA reaffirms Pakistan's relationship with Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Monday emphasized the importance of Pakistan's relationship with its brotherly Islamic country Iran, highlighting the unity of the entire parliament and its members in nurturing these ties.

While presiding over the sitting, the Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq stated, "We consider Iran as our brother."

He highlighted his meeting with President of Iran, Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, where he was accompanied by a delegation comprising representatives from each political party from the lower house.

This gesture aimed to convey the message of the parliament's unity in strengthening relations with Iran, he added.

Pakistan says it backs UN agency in ensuring food security

UNITED NATIONS (INP): Pakistan has told the just-concluded UN Economic and Social (ECOSOC) Youth Forum that it supports the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in creating a facility with broader and people-centric criteria to further strengthen its efforts to defeat hunger, improve nutrition and food security in the developing countries.

"We have considerable potential in the agriculture sector and could play an important role in building the global food supply chains," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan, said at the forum attended by over 1,000 youth leaders and activists from around the world.

At the same time, he extended Pakistan's support to the UN Secretary-General's call for urgent re-

form of the global financial system, notably how to approach debt relief on behalf of the billions of distressed citizens living in the developing world, saying it was critical for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2) to end world hunger. Ambassador Jadoon also underscored the need for concerted international efforts to establish resilient and sustainable food systems that can withstand shocks and disruptions in light of the increasing vulnerability of global food systems to a multitude of challenges. He warned that the world was facing a convergence of crises, from conflicts to climate change, and from supply chain disruptions to economic contractions, which posed significant threats to the ability of existing food systems to provide nutritious, safe, and affordable diets for all.



QUETTA: Provincial Advisor Mir Ali Hassan Zehri and MPA Mir Samad Khan Gorgage meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Closing ceremony of Eiman Mela held: CM's vision is to provide healthy activities to women & youth: Farah

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Member Provincial Assembly, Ms. Farah Azeem Shah has stated that it is vision of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti to provide healthy activities to the women and youth which increase their capabilities.

She was addressing the closing ceremony of Eiman Pakistan Mela arranged at the Liaquat Park on Sunday night.

Ms. Fatah Azeem Shah said that the objective behind holding the Eiman Pakistan Mela is to portray the positive image of Balochistan on one hand and provide opportunities to women to introduce their skills on the other hand, she added.

The lady MPA from Balochistan Awami Parry said that such melas also provide opportunity to the participating women and

children to witness the dresses and other traditional items at the stalls set up in such festivals but they also benefit from their experiences and skills.

The members of provincial assembly, political personalities and other high ups participated in the ceremony. The women and children coming from different areas expressed their deep interest in the stalls of cultural dresses, handicrafts and different food items.

The singers presented national and traditional songs in the closing ceremony of Eiman Pakistan Mela.

Most of the men and women participated in the ceremony wearing traditional cultural dresses and shoes.

It may be mentioned here that Ms Farah Azeem Shah was the main organizer and host of the festival.



QUETTA: Provincial advisor environment Naseem Ur Rehman addressing a press conference.

Bushra Bibi shifting to Adiala jail case: We don't want more delay: IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): We are seeing if any thing is not illegal.

Justice Miangul Hassan remarked how can chief commissioner declare himself provincial government. You have kept him in solitary confinement. This is in a way a torture.

The court remarked one writ and 6 miscellaneous petitions have come in this case.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb while moving to state counsel said you have no grounds.

The court inquired from the counsel do you want to get shift Bushra Bibi from Bani Gala to Adiala jail.

The counsel Usman Riaz Gul said yes, we want to get transfer Bushra Bibi from Bani Gala to Adiala jail.

The court while summoning written arguments from lawyers of Bushra Bibi on next hearing remarked we want more delay is not made in this case.

The hearing of the case was adjourned till next week. Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb remarked how chief commissioner can declare him provincial government. You have kept her in solitary confinement. This is in a way a torture.

The petition filed by Bushra Bibi requesting court for shifting her from Bani Gala to Adiala jail came up for hearing before Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb Monday.

Usman Riaz Gul and Khalid Yousuf Chaudhry appeared as counsels for Bushra Bibi.

State counsel said we on our own are seeing about establishment of sub jail.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

Gillani calls for enhancing parliamentary engagements between Pakistan and Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani on Monday extended a warm welcome to the Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and his delegation, and called for enhancing parliamentary engagements, fostering regional cooperation, and further improving bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran.

During the meeting, the chairman emphasized the deep historical ties between his family and Iran, tracing back to his ancestor, Hazrat Ghaus-ul-Azam, said a news release issued by the Senate Secretariat.

He reiterated the per-

sonal significance of his past visits to Iran, where he emphasized the importance of bilateral dialogue in strengthening relations between the two nations.

He recalled that Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan in 1947, further solidifying the strong ties between the two nations.

Reaffirming the enduring cordial relations between Pakistan and Iran, the chairman celebrated the strong bilateral ties grounded in shared values and cultural heritage. He emphasized that these ties serve as the bedrock of foreign policy, contributing to

regional stability and prosperity.

Expressing commitment to enhancing parliamentary cooperation, the chairman underscored the need for greater inter-parliamentary engagements and exchange programs aimed at bolstering the capacity and expertise of parliamentary staff.

He also shared concerns over recent developments in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting the volatile situation and expressed gratitude for Iran's continued support towards the just cause of the Kashmiri people.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in a meeting with President of Iran Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi.

Asif Zardari seeks presidential immunity from court in NAB case

ISLAMABAD (Online): The court has given indication to issue arrest warrants of president Asif Ali Zardari in NAB case while counsel for Asif Ali Zardari has sought presidential immunity from court.

According to media reports, Thatta water supply reference against Asif Ali Zardari and others came up for hearing in Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad Monday.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana of AC heard the case. Judge remarked during hearing of the case one accused has not signed roll. if

he does not appear then his arrest warrants will be issued.

The counsel for president Asif Ali Zardari sought presidential immunity saying petition has been filed on behalf of Asif Ali Zardari for presidential immunity.

The report regarding NAB presidential immunity was presented in the court.

According to NAB report under article 248 of the constitution president enjoys presidential immunity.

The court adjourned the hearing of the case till May 21.

Acting Speaker visits different sections of BA Secretariat

Independent Report

QUETTA: The acting Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Ms Ghazala Gola visited different sections of the Assembly on Monday.

She was briefed about the Secretary Provincial Assembly and other senior officials about the overall functions and operations of the assembly.

The acting Speaker went round of different sections of assembly and oversaw their functions.

It may be mentioned here that Deputy Speaker Ms Ghazala Gola has been serving as acting Speaker of the provincial assembly these days.

CDC of RMC calls emergency meeting on 25th April

Independent Report

NOKUNDI: The Community Development Committee (CDC) of the Rekodiq Mining Company has called an emergency meeting on April 25 at the residence of its General Secretary, Haji Arz Mohammad Barech, to address the concerns and anxieties of the youth and the public regarding the irregularities in the employment process of the Rekodiq Project, the company's policies, and other issues.

The CDC members have stated that they will take a strong stance on prioritizing the social interests of the area and giving preference to local youth in the project. They said that if they cannot serve the public through the CDC, they will consider dissolving the committee. They also stated that this time, there will be a straightforward conversation with the responsible persons of Rekodiq.



QUETTA: Secretary Finance Babar Khan presenting a shield to newly appointed Provincial Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Nausherwani.

Harnai-Sibi railway section restored for traffic after nine days

HARNAI (INP): Pakistan Railways has restored the Harnai-Sibi railway section for train service after nine days on Monday.

The railway track was damaged during recent flash floods generated by unprecedented rainfall in Balochistan.

The railways restored the track with repair after the train service suspended for nine days.

It is to be mentioned here that the Harnai-Sibi section of Pakistan Railways was restored last year in October for train service

after closure of railway traffic for 18 years. The railway track was closed in February 2006.

The railway's track was made dysfunctional after a series of bomb blasts, which damaged 22 steel bridges in the highly rugged and inaccessible area.

In March 2016, a contract for rehabilitation and restoration of the Sibi-Harnai railway track along with the upgradation of railway stations was awarded to the NLC.

WB initiates Integrated Flood Resilience & Adaptation Project costing Rs. 8.8 bn in Balochistan

Independent Report

QUETTA: The World Bank has started the Integrated Flood Resilience and Adaptation Project costing Rs. 8.8 billion for construction and repair of different infrastructure affected during floods in the Balochistan province.

In addition to this, the World Bank is also going to start another project of 100 million US dollars namely Balochistan Water Security Productivity Improvement Project. This project would help meet the water shortage in Quetta city besides improving the Kachhi plane flood management.

This was informed by the delegation of World Bank who called on the Provincial Minister for Irrigation, Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani here on Monday.

The team leader of World Bank, Yoro Sidibe led the delegation.

Also present on the occasion were Secretary Irrigation, Hafiz Abdul Majid, Project Director of Balochistan Integrated Water Resource Management and Development Project, Barkatullah Kakar and other concerned high ups.

The members of delegation briefed the ongoing and new projects of the World Bank.

It was informed that the Balochistan Integrated Water Resource Management and Development Project would complete in beginning of year 2025.

This project is being executed at cost of Rs. 14.747 billion.

The Provincial Minister on the occasion appreciated World Bank's initiatives in water sector in the province.

He directed to the concerned authorities to ensure best quality of work on the projects with transparency.

Govt renames Islamabad's new highway as Iran Avenue

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to name a new highway in Islamabad after the brotherly neighbouring country, Iran.

Islamabad's Eleventh Avenue has been named Iran Avenue as per the federal government's decision. The decision has been accorded by the federal cabinet on the CDA summary through circulation. It may be noted that the CDA has started the construction of Eleventh Avenue.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi today arrived in Pakistan for a three-day official visit.

The Iranian president reached the federal capital with his spouse, a high-level delegation of cabinet members and senior officials.

The Foreign Office (FO) said Raisi arrived at the Islamabad airport and was received by Housing Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada and Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran Mudassar Tipu.

NA unanimously passes resolution to address plastic pollution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a resolution, calling for coordinated efforts among citizens, organizations, and government entities to tackle the global challenge of plastic pollution.

The resolution, presented by Federal Minister

Azam Nazir Tarrar on World Earth Day, said that the Government of Pakistan acknowledged the critical importance of safeguarding the planet, its environment, and ecosystems.

It highlights the detrimental impact of plastic pollution on Pakistan's environment.

The resolution said the Ministry of Climate Change recognised the paramount importance of preserving the environment and ecosystems.

It emphasized the urgent need to combat plastic pollution, as highlighted by the theme "Planet versus Plastic," and safeguard the planet's health.



QUETTA: A delegation led by team lead of World Bank Yoro Sidibe meeting with Provincial Minister for Irrigation Mir Sadiq Umrani.