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

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

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

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

He thanked Georgieva for supporting Pakistan in securing the USD 3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) from IMF last year that was about to be completed. The IMF Executive Board is expected to meet on April 29 to decide on the final tranche of USD 1.1 billion under SBA.

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

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



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

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

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

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

He said that the climate change issue had also com-

pletely changed the landscape.

Pakistan was not responsible for any emissions in the world, he said, adding but in the year 2022, it witnessed the worst climate triggered floods which hugely devastated the infrastructure and buildings and as consequently, they had to spend billion of rupees to rehabilitate the affected people.

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

Continued on page 2



QUETTA: Commissioner and Administrator Quetta, Hamza Shafiqat along with officers of Metropolitan Corporation are inspecting the cleanliness drive, at Brewery road in Quetta.

Inquiry ordered to probe into assassination: Two more labourers gunned down by armed assailant in Kech district

Incident of killing of labourers in Kalat conspiracy to spoil law & order, says Langove

Independent Report QUETTA: Two labourers were gunned down by some unknown armed assailants in Tump area of Kech on Sunday.

According to the reports reaching here, two labourers—basically welders—were working on a mechanic shop in Tump area of Kech when unknown armed assailants appeared on the scene and open indiscriminate fire targeting the labourers.

As a result, both sustained multiple bullets and

succumbed to the wounds before they were shifted to the nearby hospital.

In the meantime, the armed assailants managed to flee from the scene leaving the labourers in the pool of blood.

Their bodies were shifted to the hospital. The labourers belonged to Faisalabad area of Punjab.

Meanwhile, the area levies and administration reached the spot and started investigations.

Continued on page 2



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets the Amir of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the sidelines of a special meeting of the World Economic Forum.

PM, Amir of Kuwait discuss bilateral ties

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

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

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

PM, Saudi Crown Prince discuss bilateral, regional issues



RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif attended the Special Dialogue and Gala Dinner on Sunday evening hosted by Saudi Crown Prince His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman during the ongoing Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Riyadh.

During the event, the prime minister exchanged views with His Royal Highness the Crown Prince.

He congratulated the Saudi leadership on the successful organization of the WEF Special Meeting and the excellent arrangements by the hosts.

While recalling their recent meeting in Makkah during his visit to Saudi Arabia during Ramadan, the prime minister thanked His Royal Highness the Crown Prince for sending a high-powered delegation to Pakistan led by Foreign Minister His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah. The delegation held extensive discussion with their Pakistani counterparts on ways to enhance the portfolio of Saudi investments in Pakistan. To continue the discussion, the prime minister said that he has brought with him a high-powered delegation to Riyadh, including key Ministers responsible for investment, so that follow up meetings could take place between relevant officials.



QUETTA: Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove talking with senior journalists Banaras Khan and Noor Ellahi Bugti during a meeting

Two terrorist killed in DI Khan IBO

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

During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between troops and terrorists, and resultantly two terrorists; Terrorist Faheem Nawaz Gandapuri and Terrorist Mohsin Nawaz, were killed. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorists who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the Security Forces as well as innocent civilians including target killings and extortion.

Pays surprise visit to different areas of Quetta city: No compromise would be made on maintaining law & order in Balochistan, says Langove

Provincial Minister for Home maintains security plan revisited after Noshki and Mach terrorism incidents

Independent Report QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove has categorically stated that it is topmost duty of the government to maintain law and order, and as such no compromise would be made on maintaining law and order situation in the province.

He said that all out efforts are being made to protect life and property of the masses and eliminate terrorists from the province. The Minister Home was speaking on occasion of surprise visit to different parts of Quetta city on Sunday afternoon.

Accompanied with him were the Assistant Commissioner Quetta Sadar and Superintendent of Police Sariah, Shaqafat Janjua.

Mir Ziaullah Langove reviewed the overall law and order situation and encroachments established in different parts of the city including Sariah road, Joint road, Qambrani road and other areas.

He said that the basic objective behind his surprise visit to different parts

ent parts of Quetta city on Sunday afternoon.

During his meeting with the prime minister on the margins of the Forum, Saudi Minister for Investment Khalid Al-Falih called him a "Man of Action," recognizing his performance and speed of work, along with his commitment

to contributing to Pakistan's development and progress.

This is the second time Shehbaz Sharif has earned such a distinction from foreign leadership as earlier, he was given the title of "Shehbaz Speed" by a Chinese leader to acknowledge his swift execution of development projects while serving as Punjab chief minister.

"We are all aware of your performance and speed of work," the Saudi

Continued on page 2

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was declared the "Man of Action" by the Saudi leadership in recognition of his commitment to reviving Pakistan's economy through massive reforms and foreign investment.

This acknowledgment came during his busy day in Riyadh, where he met different leaders and addressed a special meeting of the World Economic Forum.

The remarks were

Government ever ready to resolve issues of media persons: Langove

Independent Report QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove has stated that the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and his cabinet is ever ready to resolve the issues being faced by media persons in the province.

He urged the journalist community to use their capabilities for betterment of the nation and country.

The Provincial Minister was speaking on the occasion of his visit to Quetta Press Club on Sunday.

BLA's most wanted terrorist held, makes key revelations

KARACHI, (INP): The police arrested a most wanted terrorist of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) here in the metropolis on Sunday who has made important revelations in the preliminary investigation. According to DIG South Asad Raza, the nabbed terrorist was identified as Mehraj alias Mama who was engaged in doing reiki for BLA.

The detainee also used to convey the reports of intelligence organizations to BLA on which the defunct organization used to conduct attacks on security forces.

Terrorists, their financial, ideological supporters to be taken to task: CM

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that the terrorists as well as their financial and ideological facilitators would be taken to task at every cost.

In a condemnation statement issued here on Sunday, the Chief Minister strongly condemned the killing of two labourers in Kech. He said that the terrorists killed two innocent Pakistanis in Kech, which is condemnable.

The Chief Minister also said that when the people like us say that the nationalist separatist is terrorism, then it is said that it is a war of rights.

He said that the innocent persons were martyred after identification, which is condemnable.

The Chief Minister

maintained that the Balochistan government is standing with the bereaved families of oppressed innocent and armless labourers in the time of grief.

Meanwhile, in another statement issued here on Saturday night, the Chief Minister expressed satisfaction over successful operation by FC North in Harnai area.

He said that the FC saved the people from very big loss by carrying out prompt and successful operation. A terrorist was killed and three others injured in the operation carried out against terrorists, he added. He appreciated the services of FC for protection of the life and property of the masses.

He pledged to make Balochistan the land of peace by eliminating the terrorists.



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

FM Ishaq Dar appointed deputy prime minister

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

The Cabinet Division had issued the notification of the appointment.

At present, the foreign minister is accompanying the prime minister on his visit to Saudi Arabia.

Dar was appointed as the country's foreign minister after the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) formed a coalition government following the February 8 elections. Dar, 73, a chartered accountant and a seasoned politician, is also a close relative of, and close aide to,



PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif. The appointment of four-time finance minister as foreign minister suggested a ramped up role for economics in the nation's diplomacy as the country tries to secure another IMF deal and shore up external financing from foreign capitals.

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

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

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

"There are several conspiracies being hatched to weaken and divide Pakistan, this issue need to be addressed properly", said Ali Sahin who is also central leader of the current ruling Türkiye Justice and Development Party (AKP) in an

interview to a selected group of journalists, along with Shabana Ayaz head of Türk Pak Women Forum was also part of the panel.

Ali Sahin got his higher education in Karachi and served in Türkiye missions in Pakistan at various capacities and has a lot wonderful memories for the country. In the interview apart from shedding light at various international issues shared his personal experience and good memories during the period he got

Continued on page 2



QUETTA: Provincial Ministers Noor Muhammad Dummar and Ali Madad Jattak visiting different sections of PRC Center Sariah

Gillespie to coach Pakistan in red-ball cricket, Kirsten in white-ball cricket

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Cricket Board has confirmed Jason Gillespie as the red-ball head coach and Gary Kirsten as the white-ball head coach of the Pakistan men's cricket



team. Azhar Mahmood has also been confirmed as an assistant coach across all formats. The three appointments have been made for a two-year period following a recruitment process.

Kirsten will take charge of the side immediately after completing his assignment in the Indian Premier League. During his tenure, besides the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 and other bilateral white-ball series, Kirsten will also be in charge of the side for next year's ICC Champions Trophy 2025

in Pakistan, ACC T20 Asia Cup 2025 and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 in India and Sri Lanka.

Gillespie will assume responsibilities for the ICC World Test Championship fixtures against Bangladesh (at home in August), which will be followed by Tests against England (at home in October) and South Africa (away in December) in the 2024-25 season.

"I extend my congratulations to Jason Gillespie and Gary Kirsten on their appointments as the red and white-ball head coaches of the Pakistan men's cricket team, respectively. Their stellar track records precede them, and I warmly welcome them to the Pakistan cricket family."

"Jason's coaching career

has been marked by success both at the domestic and international levels, with a focus on player development and achieving excellence in team performance. Gary's coaching career has been marked by his ability to instill a winning mentality, develop young talent, and achieve success at the highest levels of the game, making him one of the most respected and sought-after coaches in cricket.

"In this background, I have every confidence that their expertise will guide our players to reach new heights, aligning with their inherent talent and the expectations of our passionate fans. These high-quality appointments also present a remarkable opportunity for our players to glean insights from these seasoned professionals, refining their skills and fortifying their cricketing acumen.

"The PCB is unwavering in its commitment to furnish the national team with top-tier resources and facilities, fostering an environment conducive to unlocking their full potential and consistently delivering stellar performances."



LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Azhar Mahmood answering the questions of journalists in a press conference regarding the performance of the national cricket team in the recent series at the Gaddafi Stadium of the Provincial Capital.

Saudi leadership declares PM Shehbaz...

Continued from page 1
minister said, adding that the prime minister was advancing the mission of progress in Pakistan, with their full support. "Your mission is our mission," he remarked.

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

He lauded Pakistan's prominent role in the progress of Saudi Arabia in different fields. During the meeting, it was agreed that Saudi Arabia would further explore opportunities of investment in Pakistan. He reaffirmed the support of Saudi Arabia in the economic progress of Pakistan and called the "progress of Pakistan the progress of Saudi Arabia".

He said that Saudi Arabia had made difficult decisions for reforms at the government level regarding its Vision 2030. The prime minister also met the Saudi Minister for Industry who expressed keen interest in collaboration with Pakistan in agriculture, mining, information technology and other areas.

The Saudi minister said he was in contact with the Saudi private companies regarding investment

in Pakistan and the representatives of these companies would soon visit Pakistan.

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

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

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

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

He told the gathering that despite no contribution to the emissions, Pakistan witnessed the worst climate change-triggered floods in 2022 which hugely devastated the infrastructure and buildings and had to spend billions of rupees to reha-

bilitate the affected people.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that for the rehabilitation efforts, they sought costly loans. "Can a developing country like Pakistan afford it?" he questioned and observed that for the provision of health facilities, a developing country like Pakistan required resources.

"The yawning gap between the Global South and Global North should be bridged," he emphasised.

Sharing his personal experiences, the prime minister said that treatment for fatal diseases like cancer was too costly for the poor population of Pakistan.



Additional Deputy Commissioner General & Focal Person Hanglaj Mata Mandar Syed Yasin Akhtar inspecting medical camp set by Pakistan Coast Guard for yatraees

International powers do not want stability....

Continued from page 1
education in Pakistan, he is found of Pakistani cuisines.

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

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

Continuing, he said Islamic countries are poor and have limited sources

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

He is advocate of further cementing the existing ties between two brotherly Islamic countries Turkey and Pakistan through boosting trade, defense and cultural activities.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

In a testament to honoring the legacy of the valiant martyr, the newly renovated shrine now stands adorned with commemorative photographs and artifacts, meticulously curated to reflect the profound essence of Captain Karnal Sher Khan's life and sacrifices.

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

In a poignant gesture of solidarity and respect, Corps Commander Peshawar also took the opportunity to personally meet with the family of Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed, extending heartfelt tributes for his exemplary service and sacrifice in service of the nation.

The profound gratitude expressed by both the family of Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed and the local community in Swabi stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment and dedication of the Pakistan Army towards preserving the memory of our national heroes.

Locals catch marsh crocodile near Jiwani

KARACHI (APP): A marsh crocodile was caught by locals at Kuntani Hor near Dashed River, north of Jiwani in Balochistan.

According to a communicate here on Sunday, the crocodile was later tied to a wooden pole awaiting its release further north.

It is 20 km north of Jiwani town off the Balochistan coast. Crocodiles are known from many coastal rivers along the Balochistan coast, including the Hub River, Hingol River, Basul River, and Dashed River (along the Balochistan border).

Very large crocodiles are known from these rivers, and it is not uncommon to see crocodiles of 4 meters or more. Marsh crocodiles scientifically known as

Crocodylus palustris are known to be distributed from southern Iran to the Indian subcontinent.

Usually, the local community does not disturb these crocodiles along rivers of Sindh and Balochistan, rather these animals are respected and even considered to be of religious importance, like Muggar of Mango Pir. In some rare cases, if they appear near residential areas of the local communities, they are harmed and threatened, but in most cases, these are caught and released at appropriate places.

In Dashed River, this mugger crocodile is found downstream of Mirani Dam but seldom reaches near the sea area like Kuntani.

Two more labourers gunned...

Continued from page 1
The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove has expressed sorrow over the killing of two labourers in Kech district on Sunday.

According to an official hand out issued here, the Minister for Home sought report of the firing incident and ordered inquiry into it. He said that the killing of innocent labourers is sorrowful.

He also termed the incident of killing as a conspiracy to spoil law and

order situation in the country.

He said that we are with the bereaved families of those killed in Kech. He said that he is in contact with the concerned authorities over the incident.

Meanwhile, the spokesman of provincial government said that the order has been issued for investigations into the killing incident.

He said that Chief Minister Balochistan has issued directives to improve the security arrangements further.

Two Railway Police personnel killed in Mardan

MARDAN (INP): Two Railway Police personnel were killed while five were seriously wounded after they had a clash with the guards standing outside the Zaman Sons Shopping Mall in Mardan on Sunday.

Rescue1122 personnel said that they had shifted the injured to a hospital after the provision of first aid.

No compromise..

Continued from page 1
of Quetta was to review the law and order situation and other facilities.

He said that the provincial government is taking steps for protection of life and property of the masses.

He said that no compromise would be made on maintaining law and order on directives of the Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti.

He said that the police and district administration has been directed to take steps for prevention of crimes on Sariab road and other areas.

He said that the security has been reviewed after the incidents, which were occurred in Noshki and Mach.

He said that the government is committed to eliminate the terrorists from the province.

Ambassador Hashmi says Pak Embassy Beijing to create platform for students, professionals to explore opportunities

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Embassy, Beijing will create a permanent platform for Pakistani students and professionals to get together, share information, interact with each other, and explore opportunities in China, Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi said.

Addressing the participants of Pakistan Professionals and Students Forum under the theme Building Bridges between Academia and Industry organized by the Embassy of Pakistan, Beijing, he said the forum provides students with a chance to communicate

with professionals, which helps students find jobs.

As Pakistan continues to strengthen its economic ties with China through initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it is essential to ensure that the country workforce is equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in this evolving landscape, he added.

Ambassador Hashmi commended the Pakistani community for its contributions to solidifying the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between China and Pakistan.



QUETTA: Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove inquiring about health of players injured in Kalat during his visit to Civil Hospital

PM calls upon bridging gap...

Continued from page 1
ties, a developing country like Pakistan required resources.

"The yawning gap between the Global South and Global North should be bridged," he emphasised.

Sharing his personal experiences, the prime minister said that treatment for the fatal disease like cancer was too costly for the poor population of Pakistan.

He said that as a chief minister of Punjab, he had provided about 130 million inhabitants of the province with best medical treatment initiatives like screening and treatment facility for Hepatitis in the remotest and backward areas of the province where the poor people had been in dire need of basic facilities like education and health.

The prime minister further informed that as the former chief minister, he also established the first kidney and liver hospital in Punjab which was probably one of the best in Asia where the poor patients were provided with free of cost treatment.

About Dengue outbreak in 2011 in the province, he shared that the phenomenon in the health sector was one of the biggest in the world. But they got experts and equipment and with

the cooperation of entire government machinery, civil society and common man launched a massive drive against the dengue larvae, he added.

"They were able to control the outbreak with collective efforts and meager resources," he said, adding that it was a test case for the global study in health sector.

The prime minister appreciated the initiatives launched by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the health sector and said that they had been serving the ailing humanity with their kind gestures.

He also acknowledged Bill Gates' generosity during the 2022 floods to support the affected people of Pakistan.

He expressed that with their cooperation, they would be able to get rid from the polio.

Expressing his views, World Health Organization Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed upon collective efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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1	01	اسٹیشن	پولیس
2	02	پولیس	پولیس
3	03	پولیس	پولیس
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Romina says: 1st Margalla Hills Half marathon best effort to champion climate awareness

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Sunday appreciated the civil society's spirit to promote running as a healthy leisure activity and termed the first-ever Margalla Hills Half Marathon held at the scenic Trail-5 of the National Park as a best effort to champion climate awareness. Addressing the Margalla Hills Half Marathon which is the first and only trail running half-marathon in the federal capital organised by the pioneer group of running, Islamabad 'Run With Us' as chief guest, the Prime Minister's Coordinator extended her felicitations to the winning athletes and participants for actively participating in the adventurous endeavour and championing the climate awareness.

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

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

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

have to ensure its conservation. Say no to plastics and 1 am championing it, whereas media is our messenger and should carry forward this message as well," she said. She congratulated the marathon winners and participants and lauded their determination to walk for nature. "Everyone got their reward in the form of the best clean air and natural environment during the marathon," she added.

Chairperson, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), Rina Saeed Khan thanked the media for supporting the cause of environmental conservation and mass awareness on responsible role towards nature.

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



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

Foreign tourists showing interest in Pakistan's cuisines

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

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

over the world.

He emphasized the need to further market the cuisines through international tourism fairs aimed to introduce the country's foods to encourage foreign tourists to throng towards Pakistan besides showcasing its rich tourism potential.

He said that Pakistani chefs are entertaining traditional food lovers by establishing hotels and restaurants worldwide, underscoring their contributions to the country's pride. The official expressed

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

He said that the present government was appreciating their contribution to the culinary landscape and tourism sector, anticipating a bright future for tourism in Pakistan if such dedication continues.

Main issue of this LS polls is restoration of basic rights of IIOJK people: Mehbooba

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and candidate for the Islamabad-Rajouri parliamentary constituency in the illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti, has said that the Lok Sabha (LS) polls in the territory were above the basic issues this time.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Mehbooba Mufti, addressing party conventions and road shows at Mandi tehsil areas in Poonch district, said the main issue of this election is the restoration of basic rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir that

were snatched on August 5, 2019.

She further said, "People from this parliamentary constituency are eager to vote for a voice that can effectively advocate their issues in parliament."

"While basic issues always have vital importance in every election of any area, the ongoing Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir are above basic issues and revolve around the restoration of snatched rights of people," she added.

She said, "There is no doubt that electricity, water, road connectivity, education, and the like are election-related issues.

Farewell ceremony held in honor of outgoing officials

ISLAMABAD: A farewell ceremony was held in honor of Inspector Muhammad Wilayat, Inspector Pervaiz, Inspector Amjad Farooq, Inspector Muhammad Aslam, Head Constable Raja Gulistan, Head Constable Abdul Ghafoor, Head Constable Asim Mehmood, Head Constable Muhammad Aslam and Constable Asad Mehmood at Security Division, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the SP Judicial Protection Unit Iqbal Khan graced the ceremony as chief guest, while other senior police officers were also present on the occasion.

IIOJK witnessing upsurge in arrest, CASOs, harassment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The political experts and analysts have said that Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing an upsurge in cordon and search operations (CASOs), harassment and arrest of youth. According to Kashmir Media Service, the political experts and analysts, including Dr Zubair Ahmed, Muhammad Furhan, Muhammad Iqbal Shaheen and Syed Haider Hussain, in their interviews and statements in Srinagar deplored the arrest of innocent youth during continued house raids and cordon and search operations under draconian laws

in the occupied territory.

They lamented that Hurriyat leaders, media men, rights activists and even ordinary people were being implicated in fake cases. The political experts and analysts pointed out that the arbitrary arrests were aimed at terrorizing the peace and freedom-loving people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir. They said arrests and raids are manifest of the Bharatiya Janata Party to subdue the people of the territory of Kashmir.

The political experts and analysts called for the restoration of Articles 370 and 35-A in their original form and end to the atrocities.

IGP Islamabad directs traffic police officers to improve performance

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

sion from their respective DSPs before impounding any motorcycle or vehicle in a police station.

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



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

He further said that while maintaining civility and good conduct, every possible assistance should be provided to citizens on the roads and all traffic officers must obtain permis-

up the process of issuing minimal tickets to drivers and assisting them with awareness, so that citizens can be informed about traffic laws and road safety, and the city can be kept safe from accidents, he added.

He further said that our goal was not to issue tickets but to protect the lives and property of citizens and ensure smooth traffic flow. Every possible step should be taken to ensure strict enforcement of the law and ensure uninterrupted traffic flow to gain the trust and cooperation of the citizens.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



ISLAMABAD: A Sculpture Exhibition organized by Islamabad Arts Gallery, at F-9 Park in the Federal Capital.



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

Climate change challenges Potohar farmers' livelihood

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

In a region, spanned over 28448.9 sq km famed for cultivating staples like wheat, maize, pearl millet, gram, barley, and groundnuts, the impact of climate change is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. Nowhere is this more evident than in the dry Barani

region nestled within the heart of Potohar. Here, water scarcity and erratic weather patterns, exacerbated by climate change, have become grim realities faced by farmers and the entire population on a daily basis.

Naseer Memon, a renowned expert on climate change and natural disasters, emphasized the critical link between weather patterns and agricultural outcomes. He pointed out that the delayed snowfall this year could lead to a thin layer of snow, which might swiftly melt as temperatures rise. Additionally, April witnessed an unusually wet spell, causing significant damage to ripe wheat crops in Punjab. Memon warned

that if climate change leads to heavy monsoon showers and subsequent floods, it could wreak havoc on crops, as was witnessed in 2022 when Pakistan incurred substantial losses in the agriculture sector due to abnormal rains, particularly in Sindh. Moreover, the intrusion of cold weather into the summer months could adversely affect the production of mangoes and dates. Highlighting the economic ramifications, Memon underscored Pakistan's heavy reliance on agriculture, which forms the backbone of its economy. Any adverse impact on agricultural production due to climate change would directly affect markets.

PFA committed to ensure food safety: DG

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

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

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

Only for Lahore, there were 18 food safety teams,

leading to a 90% increase in inspections compared to the previous year, resulting in fines being imposed on violators, he said.

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

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

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

PTDC plans to organize 2-day tourism expo

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

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

IFL scheme continues to serve underprivileged families

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

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

Pakistan.

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

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

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

shop before going to school and take care of the business after school, allowing 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.

Inflation - a challenging task for nascent government

ISLAMABAD (APP): Although going down on trajectory during past couple of months, inflation continues to be a major challenge for Pakistan's economy, affecting the market dynamics, lives of citizens and stirring a significant concern among policymakers, businesses and general populace. No doubt that the government, soon after assuming power had embarked on an ambitious plan of bringing about structural reforms to boost revenues and put economy on growth path, the challenge still persist necessitating continuity of policies and political stability.

As the situation started improving gradually as revealed in the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), figures for March 2023, showing headline Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation rate slowed

to 20.7% from February's 23.1%, other measures like action against hoarders and cutting down prices of agricultural and industrial inputs may also have better impacts. Amidst hopes of betterment after agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF) and subsequent pouring in foreign investment, the government hopes to put economy on right track and ease out common consumers.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb has also mentioned that inflation was on a declining trend. In an interactive session with Atlantic Council's Geo-Economics Center and South Asia Center in Washington DC, he said the inflation had come down from the peak of 37-38 percent to 20-22 percent last month (March). However, economic

and business experts have stressed the need for comprehensive measures to stabilize economy and alleviate inflationary pressures for providing relief to masses and create conducive business environment.

"As cost of energy and transportation have a pivotal role in running business and production; their prices have direct impact on inflation," remarked President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Bakhtavari. "Both sectors are intricately linked, as each feeds into cost structure of the other, compounding the effects on inflation."

He suggested reduction in prices of key energy inputs like oil and electricity for a broader deflationary impact as well as modernizing industry to boost productivity to lower unit costs of production and

consequently, consumer prices. Bakhtavari also highlighted role of the government in utilizing administrative measures to influence market forces and curb inflationary pressures.

The global financial institutions have indicated that continuing on the path leading to sustainable and inclusive economic growth, there is hope that inflation would come down during fiscal year starting from June 2024.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) also optimistically predicted a decrease in headline inflation to 15.0% for fiscal 2024-25, attributing it to macro-economic stabilization. However, it mentioned that cost of energy would be a major factor in achieving this target.

According to ADB, the Central Bank has maintained a tight monetary

policy, keeping the policy interest rate at 22.0% and it is also committed to continue with a policy that lowers down inflation to medium-term target range of 5%-7%.

Amidst the economic challenges, the experts also attribute inflationary movement to international phenomena like heightened inflation in United States and geopolitical tensions in Middle East significantly influencing Pakistan's inflation through their impact on global interest rates and oil prices, respectively.

"As the economic challenges are enormous, so we need a multi-pronged approach for economic revival and controlling inflation," said Dr Usman Chohan, renowned Economist and Managing Director, Center for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS).



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

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Return to the helm

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tariq Khosa

How to restrain a powerful, overweening and tyrannical state is the key challenge we face today. The institutions of restraint on executive excesses are the rule of law and democratic accountability. The mood of discontent is writ large as we witness the politics of hubris and humiliation. The powerful have rigged the system to perpetuate their privileges. The toxic brew of hubris reflects a dystopian saga.

However, to govern a democratic society requires contending with disagreement, said Michael Sandel in *The Tyranny of Merit*. Politics, for some of us, in the words of Ben Ansell, "signals the distasteful, venal conniving of politicians", but fundamentally, politics "is about how we make collective decisions". It is important to manage "inevitable disagreements". This is why "we can't avoid politics or wish it away", Ansell writes in *Why Politics Fails*.

Elections win and losers, but their legitimacy through a fair process is crucial. We have

the police and armed forces to protect us, but who will protect us from them? We need to answer this question. We have often looked for arbitrary alternatives through 'strong' military rulers who could get things done, but those were 'false gods'. We need solutions within a constitutional framework. "While politics is imperfect, it may be our last best hope to reach common ground," says Ansell, identifying five areas to focus on: democracy, equality, solidarity, security and prosperity.

The deep state's behind-the-scenes political engineering may be a tactical win for the string pullers, but it reflects their much larger strategic failure with regard to our democratic future. To the declared winners went the spoils, leaving the declared losers with the burning sensation that the election was illegitimate, and the stolen mandate could not be accepted. What happens when the will of the people is violated? A classic example was the 1936 victory of Spain's left-wing party that the disgruntled right-wing politicians conspired to overthrow, re-

sulting in the Spanish Civil War and Gen Franco's 36-year rule. In Pakistan too, the military has ruled, cumulatively, for more than three decades, due to political infighting. We cannot afford another gridlock leading to misadventure.

According to Frank Bruni, "We live in an era defined and overwhelmed by grievances, by too many peoples' obsession with how they've been wronged and their insistence on wallowing in ire." He correctly avers that "the ascent of identity politics and the influence of social media... were better at inflaming us rather than uniting us", and promoting "a self-obsession at odds with community, civility, comity and compromise".

Bruni calls it "a problem of humility", in his forthcoming book *The Age of Grievance*. He talks about character and how a society holds itself together. "It does that with concern for the common good, with respect for the institutions" and says that "governing, as opposed to demagoguery, is about earning others' trust and cooperation." Tolerance

shares its DNA with respect as it "recognises that other people have rights and inherent values even when we disagree vehemently with them", Bruni concludes.

In Pakistan's context, institutions like courts, law enforcement and intelligence agencies have lost the trust of the citizens. This is simply a failure of governance because of institutional hubris. The institutions of restraint, that promote the rule of law and enforce accountability, stand exposed. The police, to my mind, is the worst culprit, and a toothless victim, which has acted as an instrument of persecution wielded by conniving, cruel, shadowy and unaccountable elements of the deep state. When exposing a crime is treated as committing a crime, it is nothing other than tyranny. "Beware of tyrants who tell you to live in a permanent state of fear," says Alex Jones in *The Great Reset* (2022). But what can you do? "When small men begin to cast big shadows, it means that the sun is about to set," said author Lin Yutang.

Charlie Baker, a

former Massachusetts governor, in his 2022 book *Results* says that "snap judgements — about people or ideas — are fuelled by arrogance and conceit. They create blind spots and missed opportunities". The lesson is clear: We need humble, rather than haughty, politicians. Accordingly, humility can be a bulwark against absolutism, and an antidote to the present era of grievance. Angry democracy, according to Nobel laureate Prof Daniel Kahneman, is a "nasty world of critiques, replies and rejoinders", whose "aim is to embarrass". We need to follow the advice of author John Maxwell: "you must be big enough to admit your mistakes, smart enough to learn from them, and strong enough to correct them."

Let us start by admitting our failures. In the recent elections, we messed up counting votes; we manipulated results and cobbled together a coalition of politicians who lack legitimacy and moral authority. However, all major political parties and their leaderships have gained power with overt or covert support of the establishment, that includes the deep state. Almost all of them have been the beneficiaries or victims of the machinations of the power brokers.

The present dispensation is the product of the project of political persuasion pursued by the establishment. The leadership of the PTI, PML-N and PPP have all faced incarcerations and persecution. The only way forward for them is to sit together and evolve a new charter of democracy and governance that entails civilian supremacy over military matters, parliamentary oversight after providing a legal framework for the operations of the intelligence agencies, independence of the judiciary, administrative and operational autonomy of police and law-enforcement agencies, as well as the civil services. We must abandon the impoverished mode of political engineering and follow the advice of Cass Sunstein, professor of law at Harvard: "Asking how a disagreement might actually be resolved tends to turn enemies, focused on winning and losing, into teammates, focused on truth." Let the truth be our saviour. -- Courtesy Dawn

Clashing realities

A broken, bleeding society

Ghazi Salahuddin

Every morning when I pick up the newspapers, I wonder if I will find a particular news, datelined Karachi, that is reported rather infrequently — once a fortnight or a month.

The suspense lingers for a little while because it does not make the outer pages. In fact, it is surreptitiously buried in the inside or city pages. And it is invariably a very brief and single-column snippet.

What could it be? Besides, how could a news that reports a happening or an event be a repetition of what had been reported earlier? Only statements made by high officials and political leaders make big headlines even when they are exact repetitions of what had been said earlier.

This means that I need to be more explicit about what I am saying. So, here is an example of what I found in a newspaper on Thursday. A suspected thief was lynched by a mob near Tariq Road the previous evening. Reportedly, the "suspect had barged into a house near the Noorani

Kabab intersection to steal some valuable item".

Obviously, he was caught by the people who started beating him. He died on the spot. After his body was shifted to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, the police surgeon said that the suspected thief, aged between 25 and 30 years, bore injuries with multiple fractures and open wounds.

I would admit that this is not such an important incident, considering what else is happening in the country, including within the ambit of violent crime. Yes, an alarming increase in street crime in Karachi is troubling the authorities and high-level meetings have been held to discuss the law and order situation. A number of encounters between the police and armed criminals have been reported with tragic loss of life here and there.

But I feel very disturbed by the incidents of lynching of suspects that have almost become a ritual in Karachi. It has happened again and again. I also find it notable that this week's incident has taken place in a some-

what upscale locality. Tariq Road is a popular shopping area and remains crowded. Previously, such mob violence was generally reported from outlying neighbourhoods.

As I said, these incidents do not seem to ruffle any feathers. I have not seen any in-depth coverage of any specific lynching, with graphic eye-witness accounts and an exploration of the motivations of those who had participated in the act of literally killing a person they did not know. Relevant experts have to be quizzed to make some sense of this behaviour. After all, there have to be cogent reasons for whatever is happening to our society.

Perhaps the relevant experts, if we do have them to spare their thoughts on these matters, would come up with observations that are beyond the comprehension of our rulers and policymakers. According to conventional wisdom, political and economic stability is the goal for us. But can we move in that direction without building our human resources, creating social

harmony and attending to our moral and intellectual deprivations?

Though my focus here is on mob lynching in Karachi and, indirectly, on social decay and the brutalization of Pakistani society, the nation's attention is riveted on political, economic and judicial proceedings. Politics has always been the obsession of the national media. While politics is certainly crucial as a game of thrones, I have always felt that conditions in which ordinary people have to struggle for survival are not adequately projected in the media.

I think that any one of the many heinous crimes and fatalities that have recently shocked the people — and there have been many — could serve as a mirror of our society, raising issues that demand the urgent attention of the rulers. Some of these stories do create a lot of buzz in the media but they are seldom followed up on and meticulously probed.

There is one such story that made me lose my sleep and I mention it only in support of my contention that our soci-

ety is in a really bad shape. Because of poverty and social injustice and difficulties that relate to mental health, those who live in the lower depths have to face challenges that we cannot even imagine.

The story I have is of a desperate man who took the lives of his wife and seven children in Muzaffargarh earlier this month. The report I read said that he used a glass-cutting cleaver to kill his family. He then surrendered himself to the police.

Not inclined to dwell more on it, one question that I ponder is whether our society is fundamentally different from other societies of even developing and politically unstable countries.

When we look at the current political situation, we feel that we are an emotional and active people and that our young people are politically alive.

On this point, let me pick a thread from my last column in which I had talked about my visit to the University of Karachi's campus. With its student body of

40,000, I had found the place quiet and listless. There were no signs of youthful energy or excitement. I had compared this state of affairs with the turmoil that was taking place on the campuses of major American universities.

It so happens that pro-Palestine protests on American campuses have remarkably picked up this week. What began at Columbia University last week, where about 100 students were arrested, has spread to dozens of campuses and police have intervened in many places. In one video clip, visibly South Asian students were raising slogans for 'Azadi' — 'Hum kya mange, Azadi'.

This protest on American campuses is getting so serious and aggressive that there are references to the great revolt of the American students against the Vietnam War in the late sixties.

But what is happening on our campuses? What are our students fighting for? And do they really care for human suffering — anywhere or in their own country? -- Courtesy TheNews

No child's play

Muna Khan

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

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

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

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

The media's infantilisation of young

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

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

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

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

As witnessed since the 1960s — be it student demonstrations against the Vietnam war, gun vio-

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

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

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

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

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

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

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

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

India today

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

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

As for Pakistan, India has cut off all links with it for the past eight years. Since independence, it has been an electoral issue in India. The leading political parties, particularly the BJP, demonise Pakistan to lure the votes of the Hindu majority. The underlying argument has always been that the creation of Pakistan was tantamount to the vivisection of Bharat Mata (Mother India) and must be undone to recreate Akhand Bharat (united India).

This time, the mantra is that Pakistan must stop alleged cross-border terrorism. But, the reality is that today's India is not under any terrorist threat that could be attributed to Pakistan. In fact, it is Pakistan which is under threat of cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan and India. Recent discoveries indicate that Indian intelligence has been systematically targeting opponents in Pakistan (as it has in Canada and the US).

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

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

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

Governor Punjab Balighur Rehman:

Good work of welfare orgs serving humanity should be acknowledged

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

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

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

the government in poverty alleviation and social development.

Governor Punjab said that people to people contact is very important in the relations between the two countries.

He said that many foreign delegations meet him and tell him that got a different perception about Pakistan from media before visiting, but they found it otherwise.



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



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

CM says committed to worker well-being

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

In her message on World Day for Safety and Health at Workplace, the CM said the purpose of celebrating Occupational Safety Day is to reaffirm our commitment to ensure a safe and healthy environment for workers at workplace. The chief minister said that workers' safety comes first. "We would make sure they get home safely every day. The Punjab government has already started an occupational safety campaign in collaboration with the private institutions, she mentioned.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that awareness of workplace safety culture is essential in factories, offices, construction sites and farms, adding that accidents can be prevented through the implementation of the Safety Act and training. The chief minister explained that labor laws are being amended, companies that do not care about the health and safety of employees will be fined. She vowed, "Occupational safety is the responsibility of the government and its implementation will be ensured." Maryam Nawaz Sharif impressed upon employers to ensure workers' safety and a healthy working environment, saying that employees' safety is also the responsibility of every organisation.

CM felicitates SSP Riffat on selection for IAWP award

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif congratulated SSP Riffat Bokhari on being selected for the "Excellency in Performance Award."

In her message, the CM acknowledged the professional services of the woman SSP on being selected for receiving the International Association of Women Police (IAWP) award. She said daughters like Riffat Bokhari are a beacon of light for women. "I heartily congratulate her on being selected to receive the International Association of Women Police (IAWP) award. Riffat Bokhari's extraordinary devotion and exemplary services for women protection is highly praiseworthy," she said.

Hidayat Ullah elected as President HCBA Dera

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Hidayat Ullah Malana has won the slot of President in High Court Bar Association (HCBA) Dera elections 2024-25.

According to unofficial results, Sardar Hashmat ur Rehman and Sardar Qaizar Khan Miankhal group won the HCBA elections-2024-25 with huge margin and their presidential candidate Hidayat Ullah Malana won the slot for the fourth consecutive term.

He bagged 299 votes while his opponent Noor Gul Marwat of Insaf Lawyers Forum obtained 117 votes.

Similarly, on the slot of general secretaryship, Mutti Ullah Rind won the slot by bagging 272 votes.

Body of addict found

FAISALABAD (APP): The body of an addict was found from a deserted place in the area of Millat Town police station. Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that some passersby spotted a human corpse lying at a deserted place near Nishatabad flyover and informed the police. The police handed over the body to the area police, who started investigation by dispatching it to mortuary for postmortem.

Apparently the ill-fated man of 45 years of age was an addict and he might have expired due to overdose of drugs.

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

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

The CM's Advisor after keeping himself abreast with the process of physical examination at the camp and getting feedback from the testing organizers, contacted the District Police Officer (DPO) Mansehra and pointed out

some flaws relating to the police joining test, recruitment and security arrangements.

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



SUKKUR: Minister for Universities and Board Department Sindh, Muhammad Ali Malkani addresses to media persons during press conference, in Sukkur.

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

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur has expressed his heartfelt grief and sorrow over the death of five people in a rain related incident here on Sunday.

In a message, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the bereaved families.

The Chief Minister expressed his best wishes for the speedy recovery of those injured in these accidents.

The Chief Minister has also announced financial assistance to the affected families and directed the concerned authorities to take

necessary action in this regard.

Timely relief should be ensured to the affected families, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur said.

He said, best medical care should be provided to the injured.

A detailed report of the loss of life and property across the province should be submitted, Ali Amin Gandapur directed.

In this hour of sorrow, the provincial government is with the victims, Chief Minister said in his message.

The victims will not be left alone and will be given all possible support, Ali Amin Gandapur assured the bereaved families.



LAHORE: Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi is addressing a press conference in the press club of the provincial capital.

Minister thanks Islamic Aid over financial support for children treatment

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

He was talking to Mahmoodul Hasan, head of Islamic Aid, at the University of Child Health Sciences, here on Sunday. The minister said that in the eyes of Allah, there is no greater passion than serving humanity. He said

that public private partnership convenience for people. May Allah accept the services of Islamic Aid for the suffering humanity, he prayed.

Matters of mutual interest were discussed between the both sides.

UHS Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Junaid Rasheed, Professor Dr. Nabila Talhat and Dr. Nasir Rana were present.

Minister directs authorities to expedite works on labour complex Regi Lalma

Independent Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour Department Fazal Shaqoor Khan on Sunday directed the concerned authorities to expedite works on labour complex Regi Lalma Peshawar and complete it immediately.

He also issued directives to take action for the vacation of flats occupied through illegal ways in labour colonies.

The provincial minister issued these directives on the occasion of his visit to Workers Welfare Board (WWB) Hayatabad Peshawar. The minister was flanked by the secretary, chairman and

other officers of WWB.

On the occasion, the KP labour minister was briefed about the marriage and death grant.

He was briefed that 200 million rupees were approved for marriage grant but Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) Islamabad has released only 93 million. Similarly, a total 150 million budget for death grant approved but only 42 million was released. The marriage grant was disbursed among 338 and death grant to 70 beneficiaries. Further, it is said that the total budget approved for post-matric scholarship is 1350 million.

Measles claims lives of 5 children in Tando Allahyar

CM takes notice of five children death due to measles in Tando

KARACHI (APP): Five children died of measles on Sunday in Chandru Meo village of Tando Allahyar.

According to the private news channel, the condition of 3 children brought to Civil Hospital is very critical.

According to the Medical Superintendent of the Civil Hospital, the treatment of the children was started and measles vaccination is being administered to children.

The children were identified as five year old Iqra, daughter of Ashraf, her four year old brother, Ashiq and their relative,

three year old Asif son of Yameen.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday while taking notice of the death of five children owing to measles in Tando Allahyar has sought a detailed report from the Deputy Commissioner Tando Allahyar.

He said, "It is very painful that five children have died due to a disease."

After reviewing the entire situation, he directed the deputy commissioner (DC) to provide him with a detailed report of the deaths.

The DC informed Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah that the five children had allegedly died of measles in the village Chandru Mayo of Tando Allahyar. He further said these children had died due to complications related to measles. The CM directed the Director General Health to send a team of doctors to Chandru Mayo village for the check-up of other children. He also directed that the District Health Officer (DHO) of Tando Al-Hiyar should review the situation and submit a report.

Improvement in law & order situation top priority of PPP leadership: Home Minister

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar has said that serious efforts are being made to improve the law and order situation in the province.

He said that the top leadership of the People's Party has directed to further improve law and order situation in Karachi and other cities of the province, a communique said.

"As the home minister, I have been working for almost a month and a half, and there has been a decrease in the street crimes in the last week. Action is also being taken

against negligent police officers", he added.

He was talking to the media after a meeting of the Sindh Bar Council in Karachi on Sunday. In the meeting, Yasir Arafat was elected as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Sindh Bar Council, while Kashif Hanif was elected as the Vice Chairman. Abdul Star Loharani was elected as the Chairman of the BF Committee, Sher Muhammad Wassan as the Chairman of the Legal Education Committee, and Ehsan Sial as the Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee.



KARACHI: Residents of Mehran Town Korangi are holding protest demonstration against high handedness of land grabbers, at Karachi press club.

Three killed, nine injured in Shangla torrential rains

SHANGLA (APP): Three people including a woman were reportedly killed and nine other injured during the torrential rains in Shangla. More than 300 residential houses were destroyed and hundreds were affected due to rain storm.

The link roads leading to various upper areas of Shangla were severely affected after the landslide, which C&W and TMA officials are busy clearing, most of which have been cleared. During the torrential rains, the boundary walls of three government schools collapsed while more than 50 water supply schemes were flooded.

Due to the lack of PDMA media coordination

system in Shangla, journalists are facing serious difficulties in gathering information. Cheques have been given to the people who were killed and injured during the stormy rains on the instructions of the provincial government. The peoples whose houses have been damaged are also waiting for the help of the government to rehabilitate their houses. This is a big question that needs to be addressed.

Most of the constituencies of Shangla are insisting that the funds received for the rehabilitation projects in Shangla should be spent only on the projects that have been affected and not on political grounds.

PIDE hosts talks on "Sustainable Fiscal Reforms

PESHAWAR (Online): The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) hosted a public lecture on "Sustainable Fiscal Reforms: International Experience and Applications for Pakistan," featuring Arturo Herrera Gutierrez, Global Director for Governance at the World Bank, as the keynote speaker.

At the core of his presentation, Arturo Herrera Gutierrez emphasized the urgent need for sustainable fiscal reforms in Pakistan.

Drawing from international experiences, he highlighted the criticality of establishing a stable and sustainable debt path as a cornerstone for Pakistan's economic future,

said in a press release here on Sunday.

"Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture where it can either pave the path for sustained economic growth or fall into the recurring traps of debt distress," remarked Gutierrez. In parallel, he discussed the historical context of economic challenges faced by countries like Mexico during the 1980s and how these experiences shape fiscal strategies today.

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

He emphasized that

ensuring fiscal sustainability requires a comprehensive long-term strategy, not just balancing budgets annually. These measures are critical for building credibility and securing access to financial markets. The World Banker emphasized the need to maintain consistency over time to avoid the economic problems of the past.

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

His presentation mentioned countries with gross public debt issues; notably, countries like the US, Canada, Japan, and Pakistan, which have debt-

to-GDP ratios exceeding 75%. Japan, with a debt ratio of 252% of GDP and a low interest rate of 0.88%, contrasts sharply with Greece, which faces a higher interest rate of 3.55% despite a lower debt ratio of 168%.

This indicates that the debt-to-GDP ratio is significant, but the sustainability of fiscal finances also sends a critical signal to the market, impacting interest rates.

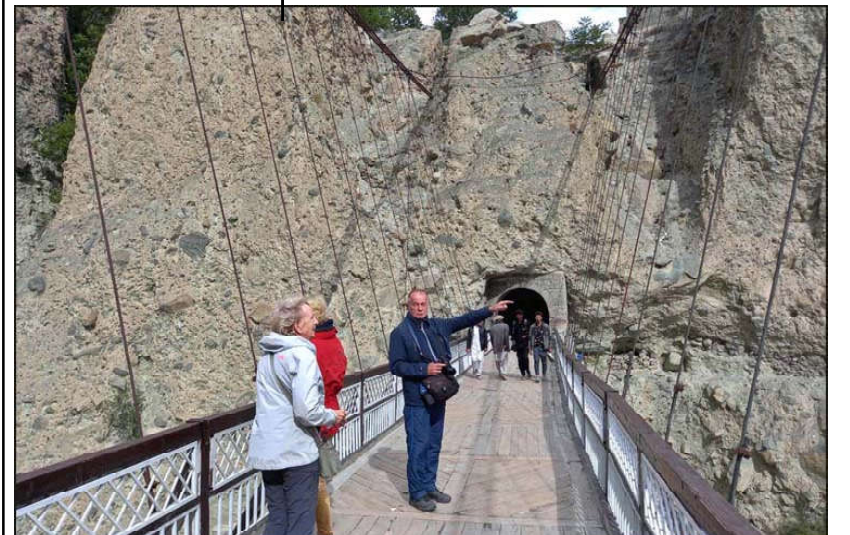
During the lecture, Gutierrez imparted critical insights on sustainable fiscal policies across the globe, focusing specifically on how these strategies can be adapted to Pakistan's economic context.

In contrast, the PIDE team proposed a nuanced

perspective, asserting that Pakistan's economic woes transcend simple accounting measures.

They advocate for comprehensive healing rather than superficial fixes. Placing growth at the center of its reform agenda, PIDE emphasizes prioritizing economic expansion over mere revenue accumulation.

They advocate for allowing the economy to flourish before imposing additional taxes, suggesting a re-regulation to facilitate transactions and stimulate economic activity, ultimately leading to improved revenue generation by default. PIDE also emphasized that the crux of the issue lies more in expenditure.



GILGIT: Foreign tourist visiting the historical 100 years old suspension wooden bridge Daniyor.

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

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

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

The president of IDB called on the prime minister on the sidelines of the special meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF), PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

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

During the meeting, progress on different projects in Pakistan was reviewed and the both sides discussed ways to explore further avenues for cooperation.

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

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

The prime minister informed that for fast tracking the foreign investment, removing all concerns of foreign investors and provision of one window operation, Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was fully functional.

The IDB president said that Pakistan was a founding and the most important member of the Bank.

He observed that the country was blessed with abundant natural and water resources and its huge manpower source could be fully utilized.



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

Pakistan's economy on recovery path amid global tides: Governor SBP

KARACHI (APP): Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmad said that the firm commitment of the government and the SBP to respond to the macroeconomic challenges has resulted in significant improvement and Pakistan's economy is on the path to recovery amid global challenges.

The SBP governor, while delivering a keynote address to the Members Convocation of ICMA Pakistan late Saturday night, elaborated on the recent improvement in Pakistan's economy and shared that it is worth taking a step back and analysing where our economy is standing and where it is headed.

Referring to the challenging macroeconomic environment Pakistan was facing a year ago, he said that inflation had reached 38 per cent, the FX reserves were fast depleting, the exchange rate was under a lot of pressure and uncertainty was quite high. However, today, inflation is coming down sharply, our reserves have risen to around US\$8 billion despite heavy debt repayments and will cross the \$9 billion mark, the current account deficit has narrowed quite significantly, and as a result, the PKR is stable while the stock market is reaching new highs, Jameel Ahmad stated adding that uncertainty has also reduced and Pakistan's bilateral and multilateral partners are continuing their support.

The governor, while citing Pakistan's economic improvements, shared that progress was made possible because of a firm commitment of the government and the State Bank of Pakistan to effectively respond to the macroeconomic challenges.

"Unpopular yet necessary measures had to be taken as the State Bank raised the policy rate to 22 per cent, in order to reduce pressure on inflation and the current account," the SBP governor said and added that the government also undertook fiscal consolidation by constraining non-essential current expenditures and the coordinated policy response was now yielding the desired results.

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

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

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

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

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

Saqib noted that due to lack of interest by the marketers and traders, gems' industry was far below than the regional competitors. They are engaged in the mining, cutting, polishing and trading of gemstones, he said.

The chamber's Vice President Faisal Shahzad, former Vice President Fayyaz Qureshi, Chamber members and representatives from the National Productivity Organization (NPO), Pakistan and Asian Productivity Organization (APO) from Thailand and Japan.



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

President PEW says: Economic reforms useless without political reforms

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

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

Murtaza Mughal said that economic reforms were being carried out under the pressure of the IMF, but the elite were spared and all burden was being placed on the poor.

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

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

The son of an African migrant has served as president of the US, and the son of an Indian migrant was presently the prime minister of the UK, he added.

However, politics has transformed into a money game in Pakistan. Our politicians were often considered disgustingly rich, self-serving, and uncaring of the people they govern.

Our politicians were known for scheming and cutting ruthless deals to secure a big stack of cash. Poor and mediocre were getting top slots in other countries, but in Pakistan, such people cannot reach the district council because here politics has been turned into a game of wealth and greed.

Murtaza Mughal said that certain families dominate all major political parties and that intra-party elections were a joke and deception. Politics has become a business for the families dominating the country's politics, so they do not want democracy in their parties, he noted.

He said it was difficult to force top politicians to introduce reforms in their parties, but it was not impossible and was vital for the country's survival.



QUETTA: Members of Central Anjuman-e-Tajran Balochistan are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Quetta press club.

Experts propose policy reforms for economic revival

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

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

Habib said Pakistan has the highest energy costs, interest rates and tax rates in the entire region. "Who will invest in such a situation?" he questioned.

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

He said that taxes cannot be collected by increasing the tax rate. Instead, economic activity will have to be increased, he added.

On the occasion, economist Syed Ali Hasnain said that discussion regarding imposing taxes wasn't new and added that taxation was the most regressive in Pakistan.

Topline Securities CEO Mohammad Sohail said that there were leakages in the industries' taxes.

"The global organizations are also saying that Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio is low," he said.

Mohammad Sohail said that the government had data regarding non-tax payers, but the problem was implementation.

China's E-commerce logistics index rises in March

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

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

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

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

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

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

The people involved in adulteration in seed, fertilizers and pesticides will be punished. The decision was taken in the Cotton Crop Management Monitoring Committee meeting at the Commissioner's office, Dera Ghazi Khan, chaired by the Additional Commissioner Coordination Karim Bukhs representing the Commissioner. Director Agriculture Mahar Abid Hussain gave briefing. SE Irrigation Shaukat Hayat Wirk said that the canal water would be released from May 1.

Customs team lauded for seizing mis-declared containers

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

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

NPO to organize workshop

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

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



KARACHI: Members of Fishermen Sujag Forum are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Karachi press club.

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

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

The MSEC of Renewables First held a graduation cum networking ceremony here Sunday for the cohort members to celebrate their endeavour and start a circle of enlightened minds intended to illumine others in different sectors linked to energy and climate change to enhance climate resilience of energy sector.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Renewables First, Zeeshan Ashfaq said the world energy transition was a move being experienced globally driving the use of renewable energy which was intended to reduce reliance on fossil fuels causing global warming.



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

Wheat farmers in a fix on price, procurement mechanism

LAHORE (APP): Amidst an expected plentiful wheat crop this year, farmer community especially small farmers are in real fix due to fluctuating wheat price and market exploitation.

As wheat harvesting starts across Punjab, representatives of Kisan Board and Kisan Ittehad have raised concerns about farmers' manipulation by hoarders, middlemen and stockists.

Although Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin has promised grower friendly policy, but his promise may dash down if the farmers are not given proper wheat price and its timely procurement.

When the wheat price is same as last year, the main challenge for the government would be to reign in market mafia who has sharpened teeth to engulf poor farmers' profit.

The provincial minister has promised to procure two million metric tons wheat and Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PAASCO) 1.4 million metric ton. But if there is bumper crop then what would be mechanism to save farmers from exploiters.

"Minimum wheat support price for current season is Rs 3900 per 40 kg. Food Director would prepare division and district-wise targets in line with the provincial targets and Food deputy directors would fix centre wise targets," the minister said. "Gunny bags distribution has started and so the purchase of wheat."

He informed that procurement campaign would continue till completion of the target. Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) would set up control room and call centers to monitor the process and responsible for all IT related solutions required for wheat procurement. "Delivery charges at rate of Rs 30 per 100 kg would be paid additionally to suppliers and growers than the minimum support price of Rs 3900 per 40 Kg." Bilal said around 393 wheat purchase centers have been set up for procurement across the province and six jute bags of 100 kgs or 12 PP bags of 50 kgs per acre would be provided to farmers.

"Private purchase, transportation and storage of wheat would be allowed on condition that private buyer would declare wheat stock before concerned officials for record purpose," he added.

Since wheat is our main staple food with per capita consumption of almost 125kg annually, many a times the country has to import it despite having good and vast agriculture land.

Reason behind this discrepancy generally was non-prudent policies of the previous governments as whenever there is bumper crop farmers' do not get proper price. Therefore, they reduce wheat cultivation area in next season. Another problem is availability of inputs on standard rates as hoarders in connivance with concerned department purchase bulk fertilizers and seed and later sell it to farmers.



LAHORE: A vendor displaying different daily use items to attract customers at roadside setup.

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

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden poked fun at himself but took sharp aim at his election rival Donald Trump on Saturday at the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner, as protesters outside demonstrated against Israel's military offensive in Gaza.

A long list of VIP guests, including journalists and celebrities from Chris Pine to Molly Ringwald, arrived in black-tie attire as more than 100 protesters confronted attendees in front of the Washington Hilton hotel chanting "shame on you" and other slogans.

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

Amid some self-mockery and ribbing of the press, the 81-year-old president took sharp-elbowed jabs at his 77-year-old presumptive November election rival, quipping that "age is the only thing we have in common. My vice president actually endorsed me."

Both Jost and Biden struck a more serious tone in addressing what many Americans feel is a politically fraught moment, with Biden telling attendees

Trump's rhetoric was a danger particularly after the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, and that "the stakes couldn't be higher."

Comedian Jost, a long-time writer and actor with NBC's "Saturday Night Live" who is married to actress Scarlett Johansson, also in attendance, recalled fondly that his recently deceased grandfather had voted for Biden "because you are a decent man."

"My grandpa voted for decency and decency is why we are all here tonight," he told the president. Biden's appearance at the banquet is in keeping with longstanding tradition for the event, in which the president and the national media gather for a roast of the US leader — an annual gala that was interrupted during the Trump administration.



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

20 Cambodian soldiers killed in ammunition base explosion

Monitoring Desk

PHNOM PENH: Twenty Cambodian soldiers were killed in an ammunition explosion at an army base on Saturday. The blast at the army base in Kampong Speu province, to the west of Phnom Penh, also wounded several soldiers, with the army saying that an entire truck of munitions had exploded.

"I am deeply shocked to receive the news of the ammunition explosion incident," Prime Minister Hun Manet said in a statement

on Facebook, expressing his "deepest condolences" to the families of those killed. It was not immediately clear what had caused the explosion.

Pictures on social media showed a destroyed one-storey building wreathed in smoke, with residents of a nearby village also sharing images online of broken windows.

Other images showed what appeared to be civilians, including a child in diapers with cuts and gashes being treated in hospital.

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

Monitoring Desk

KYIV: Fighting in eastern Ukraine has worsened and Kyiv's troops have fallen back to new positions in at least three places along the front, Ukraine's top general said on Sunday. Russian troops have been steadily advancing in the east, with the focal point of fighting near the town of Chasiv Yar and northwest of Avdiivka, which Russian forces captured in February.

Oleksandr Syrskiy said on Telegram that his troops had taken up new positions west of the villages of Berdychi and Semenivka, both north of Avdiivka.

Thai foreign minister resigns after losing deputy PM post

Monitoring Desk

BANGKOK: Thai Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara has resigned, the government said on Sunday, after losing the position of deputy prime minister in a cabinet reshuffle. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has received Parnpree's resignation letter, government spokesperson Chai Wacharonke told Reuters. "Parnpree's resignation will not affect government work in foreign affairs as the foreign ministry's permanent secretary and officials can work instead."

Russian missiles pound power plants in Ukraine

Monitoring Desk

KYIV: Russian missiles pounded power facilities in central and western Ukraine on Saturday, increasing pressure on the ailing energy system as the country faces a shortage of air defences despite a breakthrough in US military aid.

The airstrike, carried out with ballistic missiles and cruise missiles fired by Russian strategic bombers based in the Arctic Circle, was the fourth large-scale aerial assault targeting the power system since March 22.

"The enemy again massively shelled Ukrainian energy facilities," said DTEK, Ukraine's largest private electricity company, adding that four of its six thermal power plants had suffered damage.

Rescuers battled to

put out fires at several energy facilities in the western regions of Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk, which border Nato members Poland and Romania.

After strikes on energy facilities in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, running water supplies were disrupted in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih, officials said.

Ukrainian air defences brought down 21 of the 34 incoming missiles, the commander of the air force said in a statement.

None of the facilities hit was identified by name, a security measure intended to prevent Russia quickly assessing the impact of its strikes.

Russia denies targeting civilians, but says the Ukrainian energy system is a legitimate military target.

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

Monitoring Desk

RIYADH: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Sunday only the United States could stop Israel attacking the border city of Rafah in Gaza, adding that the assault, which he expects within days, could force much of the Palestinian population to flee the enclave.

"We call on the United States of America to ask Israel to not carry on the Rafah attack. America is the only country able to prevent Israel from committing this crime," Abbas told a special meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

Israel, which has threatened for weeks to launch an all-out assault on the neighbourhood saying its goal is to destroy Hamas' remaining battalions there, stepped up airstrikes on Rafah last week.

Western countries, including Israel's closest ally the United States, have pleaded with it to hold back from attacking the southern city, which abuts the Egyptian border and is sheltering more than a million Palestinians who fled Israel's seven-month long assault on much of the rest of Gaza.

"What will happen in the coming few days is what Israel will do with attacking Rafah because all the Palestinians from Gaza are gathered there," Abbas said, adding that only a "small strike" on Rafah would force the Palestinian population to flee the Gaza strip. "The biggest catastrophe in the Palestinian people's history would then happen." Abbas reiterated that he rejects the displacement of Palestinians into Jordan and Egypt and said he is concerned that once Israel completes its operations in Gaza.

China confronts Japanese politicians in disputed East China Sea area

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: China's coast guard confronted Japanese lawmakers in waters claimed by both countries in the East China Sea, China's embassy in Tokyo and Japanese media said on Sunday, the latest in a series of maritime disputes involving China and its neighbours.

Chinese vessels took unspecified law enforcement measures, the embassy said in a statement, adding that it had lodged solemn representations for what it called "infringement and provocation" by Japan near tiny, uninhabited islands that Beijing calls the Diaoyu and Tokyo calls the Senkaku.

The Japanese group, including former Defense Minister Tomomi Inada, was on an inspection mission organised by the city of Ishigaki in Okinawa prefecture, according to the Chinese embassy and Japanese public broadcaster NHK.

Japan and China have repeatedly faced off around the Japan-administered islands. China also has escalating run-ins with the Philippine navy in disputed areas of the South China Sea, where Beijing's expansive maritime claims conflict with those of a number of Southeast Asia nations.

Inada's group spent three hours near the islands on Saturday, using drones to observe the area, and the Japanese coast guard vessel sought to fend off the Chinese coast guard, NHK said.

"The government and the public are aware of the severe security situation," said Inada, a senior official of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, according to NHK. "The Senkaku are our sovereign territory and we need to go ashore for research."

It was the first such inspection trip to the area involving a member of Japan's parliament since 2013, NHK reported.

Mexican journalist is slain in south of Mexico City, spurring outrage among colleagues

Monitoring Desk

MEXICO CITY: Mexican journalists held a vigil and protest Saturday a day after one of their colleagues was slain in the southern state of Morelos.

They demanded a transparent investigation into the case and vented anger over the dangers news workers face in Mexico, which is one of the world's deadliest countries for journalists.

Dozens joined in the demonstration over the killing of Roberto Figueroa, who covered local politics and gained a social media following through satirical videos. After disappearing Friday morning, he was found dead inside a car in his hometown of Huitzilac in Morelos, a state south of Mexico City where drug-fueled violence runs rampant.

He was the first journalist to be killed this year in Mexico, which is the most dangerous country for journalists in the Western Hemisphere and has the highest number of missing journalists in the world, according to the Committee

to Protect Journalists, a press freedom watchdog.

Mexican prosecutors promised a serious investigation, and the Morelos state government strongly condemned the killing.

But in a country where press activists say pervasive corruption and impunity long have endangered reporters, Figueroa's colleagues carrying signs saying "Investigation now!" and chanting outside government offices in Morelos said they were losing patience with authorities.

"Neither the state government nor the attorney general do anything to stop the crimes that are multiplying," Jaime Luis Brito, a correspondent for left-wing magazine Proceso wrote in a statement of protest. "No one in Morelos is safe. ... Every day we count victims."

Mexican media said Figueroa was abducted by gunmen after taking his daughters to school in Huitzilac, which is about 70 kilometers (43 miles) from Mexico City.



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

Hamas 'studying' new Israeli offer for Gaza ceasefire

Monitoring Desk

JERUSALEM: Hamas on Saturday said it was studying the latest Israeli counter proposal regarding a potential ceasefire in Gaza, a day after a delegation from mediator Egypt reportedly arrived in Israel in a bid to jump-start stalled negotiations. The signs of fresh truce talks came alongside ongoing Israeli preparations for a military push into Gaza's southern city of Rafah. "Today, the Hamas movement received the official Zionist occupation response to the movement's position, which was delivered to the Egyptian and Qatari mediators on April 13," Khalil al-Hayya, deputy head of Hamas's political arm in Gaza, said in a brief statement early Saturday.

"The movement will study this proposal, and

upon completion of its study, it will submit its response." Hamas had previously insisted on a permanent ceasefire, something rejected by Israel. Egypt, Qatar and the United States have been unsuccessfully trying to seal a new truce deal in Gaza ever since a one-week halt to the fighting in November saw 80 Israeli prisoners exchanged for 240 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. The war in Gaza was also on the agenda for an international summit set to kick off in Saudi Arabia over the weekend. The World Economic Forum special meeting, scheduled to begin in Riyadh on Sunday, will include a Gaza-focused session on Monday set to feature newly appointed Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa, Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly and Sigrid Kaag.

Aid flotilla for Gaza blocked in Turkiye

Monitoring Desk

ISTANBUL: A "Free-dom Flotilla" aimed at delivering aid to Gaza was blocked in Turkiye on Saturday after being denied use of two of its ships, which organisers blamed on Israeli pressure.

A coalition of NGOs and other associations said it was unable to set sail after the West African country of Guinea-Bissau withdrew its flagged vessels.

"Sadly, Guinea-Bissau has allowed itself to become complicit in Israel's deliberate starvation, illegal siege and genocide of Palestinians in Gaza," the Free-dom Flotilla Coalition said. "The Guinea-Bissau Inter-national Ships Registry (GBISR), in a blatantly political move, informed the Freedom Flotilla Coalition that it had withdrawn the Guinea Bissau flag from two of the Freedom Flotilla's ships, one of which is our cargo ship, already loaded with over 5,000 tons of life-saving aid."

Tornadoes kill 2 in Oklahoma as governor issues state of emergency for 12 counties amid storm damage

Monitoring Desk

HOLDENVILLE: At least two people, including a child, died in tornadoes that swept through Oklahoma, authorities said Sunday as emergency crews assessed the extensive damage to homes and businesses from the high winds, hail and flooding.

Dozens of reported tornadoes have wreaked havoc in the nation's mid-section since Friday, with flood watches and warnings in effect Sunday for Oklahoma and other states — including Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas and Texas.

In Oklahoma, a tornado ripped through Holdenville, a town of about 5,000 people, late Saturday, killing two people, and injuring four others, Hughes County Emergency Medical Services said in a statement Sunday. Holdenville is roughly 80 miles (128.75 kilometers) from Oklahoma City.

"My prayers are with those who lost loved ones as tornadoes ripped through Oklahoma last night," Gov. Kevin Stitt said in a statement.

He issued an executive order Sunday declaring a state of emergency in 12 counties due to the fallout from the severe weather as crews worked to clear debris and assess damage from the severe storms that downed power lines.

Significant destruction from the storm was reported in the southern Oklahoma community of Sulphur and well as around Marietta, where a hospital was damaged, according to the Oklahoma Office of Emergency Management.

Residents in other states were also digging out from storm damage. A tornado in suburban Omaha, Nebraska, demolished homes and businesses Saturday as it moved for miles through farmland and into subdivisions, then slammed an Iowa town.

Thousands rally in Australian capitals to demand gender violence justice

Monitoring Desk

SYDNEY: Violence against women is an "epidemic" in Australia, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Saturday, as thousands attended rallies in Sydney and other major Australian cities urging tougher laws on gendered violence.

The rallies were spurred by a wave of violence against women that the government says has seen a woman killed every four days this year. The rallies also followed a mass stabbing in Sydney this month that killed six people, including five women.

Protesters demanding stronger criminal laws gathered in Sydney, capital of New South Wales state, for a rally and then a march that closed city streets. Some protesters carried signs that read "Respect" and "No More Violence".

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

Monitoring Desk

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

The pier will initially facilitate the delivery of 90 truckloads of international aid a day into Gaza, rising to up to 150 truckloads once fully operational, according to US estimates.

The aid will be pre-screened in Cyprus and delivered directly to Gaza via

the pier off the coast or via Ashdod port, which Israel has said it will open to aid vessels. "It is critical we establish more routes for vital humanitarian aid to reach the people of Gaza and the UK continues to take a leading role in the delivery of support," Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said.

Cyprus said that a ship loaded with food for Gaza — which had previously returned from Gaza after an Israeli strike killed seven aid workers — is heading back towards the territory. Earlier this month, the Jennifer returned to the Mediterranean island with around 240 tonnes of supplies that had not been unloaded after Israeli strikes.



Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen attends a demonstration in Lviv of artillery systems produced in Ukraine.

France pushes efforts in Lebanon to prevent war between Hezbollah and Israel

Monitoring Desk

NAOQURA: France's foreign minister said that he would discuss proposals with Lebanese officials on Sunday aimed at easing tensions between Hezbollah and Israel and preventing a war breaking out.

France has historical ties with Lebanon and earlier this year Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne proposed Hezbollah pulls back 10 km (6 miles) from the Israeli border while Israel would halt strikes in southern Lebanon.

The proposal has been discussed with partners including the U.S. and Paris wants to keep up the

momentum amid Israeli threats of a military operation in southern Lebanon.

Israel and Hezbollah have traded tit for tat strikes in recent months, but the exchanges have increased since Iran launched missiles on Israel in response to the killing of members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps' overseas Quds Force in the Syrian capital Damascus.

More Israeli strikes hit southern Lebanon overnight close to the United Nations' peacemaking force, according to military officials, just hours before Sejourne visited its headquarters in Naqoura.

Thousands in Budapest protest to demand child-protection reform

Monitoring Desk

BUDAPEST: Thousands took to the streets in downtown Budapest to demand child-protection reform, led by Peter Magyar, a former government insider who recently launched a political movement challenging the prime minister. The couple-thousand-strong crowd waved flags and chanted, "We've had enough."

Magyar swooped into Hungary's political scene in February as the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban was already reeling from a sex abuse scandal at a children's home that led

to the resignation of President Katalin Novak.

"Orban's government does not guarantee the basic chance for children's proper development. ... They stand no chance," Magyar said. As a follow-up of the scandal, ruling party Fidesz submitted a draft bill to the legislature on Tuesday that would mandate stricter penalties for sexual abuse of children, including the inability to obtain parole.

In February Magyar accused the government of widespread corruption and running a centralized propaganda machine.

North Korea accuses US of politicising human rights issues

Monitoring Desk

SEOUL: North Korea accused the United States on Saturday of politicising human rights in the East Asian country, denouncing what it called political provocation and conspiracy.

Pyeongyang will make stern and decisive choices to protect its sovereignty and safety in response to Washington using human rights as a tool for invasion and hostile, anti-North Korea behaviour, state media KCNA quoted a foreign ministry spokesperson as saying.

TikTok creators fear economic blow of US ban

Monitoring Desk

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP/AP): A man Chaudhary turned her love for reading into a living on TikTok, posting video snippets about books like those banned in schools in ultra-conservative parts of the United States.

Now the online platform she relies on to support her family is poised to be banned in what entrepreneurs using TikTok condemn as an attack on their livelihoods.

"It's so essential to small businesses and creators; it's my full-time job," the 23-year-old Chicago resident told AFP.



A Yemeni boy, standing on the shoulders of a demonstrator, holds a rifle during a pro-Palestinian rally in Houthi-held Sanaa.

PM, Saudi ministers discuss investment, business prospects in Pakistan

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday held separate meetings with Saudi Arabia's Minister for Investment Khalid Al-Falih, Minister for Finance Mohammad Al Jadaan and Minister for Industry Bandar bin Ibrahim Alkhourayef and discussed matters of mutual interest.

During the meetings, the Saudi minister for investment declared the prime minister the "Prime Minister of Action" and said "We all are aware of your performance and speed of work."

He said the prime minister was taking forward the mission of progress of Pakistan and they all were with him. "Your mission is our mission," he remarked.

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

He said Pakistanis in the past, played a prominent role in the progress of

Saudi Arabia in different fields. During the meeting between the prime minister and the Saudi finance minister, it was agreed that Saudi Arabia would further explore opportunities of investment in Pakistan. The Saudi finance minister reaffirmed the support of Saudi Arabia in the economic progress of Pakistan said "progress of Saudi Arabia".

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

The prime minister also met the Saudi Minister for Industry. The Saudi minister for industry expressed keen interest for collaboration with Pakistan in the fields of agriculture, mining, information technology and other areas and informed about the progress made in this regard. The Saudi minister said he was in contact with the Saudi private companies regarding investment in Pakistan and the representatives of these companies would soon visit Pakistan.



RIYADH: Saudi Minister for Finance H.E. Mohammad Al Jadaan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of a Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum.



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

Foolproof security arrangements made: Seven-day special anti-polio campaign commences in 30 districts of Balochistan today

EOC Coordinator says over 2.395 million children below five years of age to be administered anti-polio drops; around 10,000 teams formed

Independent Report
QUETTA: The seven-day anti-polio campaign is scheduled to be commenced in 30 districts of Balochistan province today (Monday).

According to the Coordinator of Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for Polio Eradication Balochistan, Syed Zahid Shah, all the necessary arrangements have been made for immunization of the children in the targeted districts of the province.

The EOC Coordinator informed that more than 2.395 million children below five years of age would be administered anti-polio vaccine during the cam-

aign. For the purpose, around 10,000 teams have been formed for vaccinating children against polio virus in the province. These are included 8,000 mobile teams besides 837 fixed sites and 541 transit points.

The districts which are not included in the campaign are: Awaran, Washuk, Kohlu, Musakhail and Surab. Except these districts, the campaign is being launched in the other 30 districts of the province.

The EOC coordinator said that foolproof security arrangements have been made for the upcoming immunization campaign in the province.

It may be mentioned here two polio cases were reported from Balochistan this year after gap of three years. The cases were reported from Dera Bugti and Chaman.

According to EOC Coordinator, the anti-polio campaign is being launched in view of the recent cases reported in the province.

He said that we are determined to eradicate polio virus from the province with support of the parents and anti-polio workers.

He urged the parents, civil society and other segments of the society to extend wholehearted cooperation to make the anti-polio campaign successful.

PEMRA urges IHC to exclude Justice Sattar from audio leak case

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

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

The application underscores the importance of continuity, advocating that the bench previously involved in a related matter should continue to handle the ongoing petitions. Justice Sattar was presiding over petitions filed by

Najam Saqib, the son of former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar, and Bushra Bibi, the spouse of former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Saqib's petition challenges a parliamentary committee's inquiry into an alleged audio recording wherein he purportedly sought a bribe for a ticket of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). On the other hand, Bushra Bibi contests an inquiry initiated by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) regarding her purported conversation.

During previous hearings, Justice Sattar had directed the intelligence agencies and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to trace the origin of the leaked audio. Additionally, PEMRA was instructed not to broadcast unauthorised or leaked conversations of individuals.

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

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

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

In a passionate speech to over 570 attendees, Ambassador Masood Khan underscored the invaluable contributions of the Pakistani diaspora, particularly physicians, in the United States. He commended the APPNA for its relentless

dedication to both medical excellence and community service, which has illuminated the positive essence of Pakistan and its people.

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

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

Emphasizing the sub-

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



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

Bilawal, Aseefa celebrate birthday of Faryal Talpur

KARACHI (APP): Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Member of National Assembly (MNA) Aseefa Bhutto Zardari celebrated the birthday of PPP Central President of Women Wing Faryal Talpur at Zardari House on Sunday.

They cut the cake and wished best days to her ahead.

Hub Rally Cross event to help promote tourism & highlight positive image of Balochistan at intl. level: Governor

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that the "Hub Rally Cross 2024" is a major motor sports event which can become source of attraction for the international male and female drivers and young champions.

The Governor believed that such events and activities would not only help promote the tourism but would also highlight the positive image of Balochistan at the international level.

The Governor was addressing the "11th Hub Rally Cross 2024" in Hub on Sunday.

Also present on the occasion were Deputy Commissioner Hub,

Rohana Gul Kakar and Chief Organizer of the Rally, Shujaat Sherwani besides others.

The Governor said that the terrorism sector can't be ignored in stabilizing economy of the province and country. In this regard, rehabilitation of the tourism places and sports events is very much needed for promotion of tourism industry in the province, adding he stressed.

Malik Abdul Wali Kakar expressed the belief that there would be positive impacts on the economic and trade activities by paying focus on the sports and tourism.

The Governor said that there's no dearth of talent and capabilities in new generation of the province.

PML-N committed to resolve economic challenges: Rana

ISLAMABAD (APP): PML-N leader Rana Sanaullah on Sunday said that the party's was committed to steer the country out of economic challenges and towards a brighter future.

Speaking to a private news channel, he said that PML-N came into power in most critical situation and now it was trying to drag out Pakistan from the crisis.

PML-N had track record of delivering to the nation, he added.

Zia visits Trauma center; inquires about health of injured local cricket players of Kalat

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove visited the Trauma Center located adjacent to the Sandeman Provincial Headquarter Hospital here on Sunday afternoon.

During the visit, the Minister for Home inquired about health of the local cricketers injured in wall collapse in Kalat on Saturday. It may be mentioned here that four cricketers

belonging to a local cricket club of Kalat were brought to Quetta for treatment.

They were admitted in the Trauma Center and provided medical treatment.

One of them was discharged after providing necessary medical treatment. However, three were still admitted in the Trauma Center.

Mir Ziaullah Langove expressed sorrow over the incident with the families of injured players.



QUETTA: Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Lango talking with senior journalists Banaras Khan and Noor Ellahi Bugti during a meeting

All minorities across Pakistan celebrating their festivals with complete freedom: Ramesh

Independent Report
LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs of Punjab Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora has said that the Constitution of Pakistan gives complete freedom to the followers of all religions living in the beloved country and in the eyes of the Constitution, every person is living in Pakistan without discrimination.

The beauty of Pakistan is that the people living here are free to practice their beliefs and religious rituals as demonstrated recently by the festivals of Easter, Ramadan, Eid, Holi and Baisakhi. People of all religions share in each

other's happiness and this is the message of the Prophets, Messengers and Saints sent by Allah who taught love, goodness, brotherhood, tolerance and also suffered for it.

He expressed these views while addressing the gathering of Christian community at Harvest Life Church in Christian town Sialkot as chief guest. Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora said that Mr. Isa Allahi salam and Imam Hussain gave the message of standing firm in the face of oppression, which can be called the end of injustice and oppression from the society.

KP police recover vehicle of abducted session judge

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police succeeded in recovering the vehicle of the kidnapped session judge from Tank. Yesterday, a sessions court judge Shakir Ullah Marwat was kidnapped from the district Tank by unknown assailants while he was going to Dera Ismail Khan.

According to media reports, the First Information Report (FIR) of the judge's abduction was registered by the Counter-Terrorism Department.

As per the channel report, a special committee was also formed regarding the session judge abduction case in Tank in which officials from CTD, police and other law enforcement agencies are included



PESHAWAR: Members of Islami Jamiat Tulba are holding protest rally against Israeli cruel and inhumane acts and express unity with the innocent people of Palestine, at GT road in Peshawar.

Stern action being taken against encroachments established at drainage nullahs in Quetta: DC

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Lt. (Retd) Saad bin Asad has stated that stern action is being taken against the encroachments established on drainage nullahs located in different parts of Quetta city.

He said that the rain water is passing through the roads and streets besides affecting the houses just because of the encroachments established and occupations made on the nullahs in city.

The Deputy Commissioner was supervising the crackdown against encroachments established in the drainage nullahs in Pashtoonabad here the other day.

The Deputy Commissioner led the local administration and Metropolitan Corporation's team against the encroachments.

During the crackdown, several houses and shops were demolished, which built on the drainage nullah.

The drainage nullah was closed due to the encroachments there.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner said that the general public is facing problems due to encroachments established on the drainage nullahs.

In view of the hardships of people, the district administration decided to take action against the encroachments on nullahs, he maintained.

Imran grants permission for Fawad Ch's return to PTI

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former minister Fawad Chaudhry is expected to rejoin Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as the party founder Imran Khan has granted permission for his return sources said on Sunday. Well-placed sources in the PTI confirmed that former premier Imran Khan granted permission for Fawad Chaudhry's return to party. The PTI sources also said a meeting between former chairman of the party Imran Khan and his former cabinet member Fawad Chaudhry is also expected next week in the Adiala Jail.

Nassem demands non-stop train from Quetta to Karachi

QUETTA (APP): Advisor to the Chief Minister on Environment, Naseem Ur Rehman in meeting with DS Railways demanded that the Pakistan Railways should launch a non-stop train on the route of Quetta to Karachi, in a bid to facilitate the passenger and cater the needs of the people of Balochistan.

He emphasized that the railway administration should take necessary steps to run a non-stop train from Quetta to Karachi on immediate basis in order to improve the railway's network and services in Balochistan, said a press release.

He also asked for the

restoration of Akbar Express from Quetta division, so that the long-standing demand of the people would be met.

Naseem Ur Rahman in a meeting with DS Railways Quetta further said that Pakistan Railways should give priority to Quetta Division for providing better travel facilities to the people.

He stressed for the restoration of train service in Balochistan and early completion of on-going projects of Pakistan Railway authority which would create better business opportunities for the local people in the province.

Pak Zaireen attend annual Urs at Dargah Hazrat Amir Khusro

NEW DELHI (APP): The Charge d' Affaires of Pakistan to India Saad Ahmad Warraich, laid the traditional chaddar on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan at the shrine of the famous mystic saint, Hazrat Amir Khusro, in New Delhi on Sunday. A group of 70 Pakistani Zaireen visiting India to participate in the 720 Urs celebrations of Hazrat Amir Khusro were also present on the occasion. The Charge d' Affaires and the Pakistani Zaireen were welcomed at the Dargah by Sajjadah Nasheen Dewan Tahir Nizami. After laying the traditional chaddar at the shrine, the participants offered dua and prayed for Pakistan's progress and prosperity. The Charge d' Affaires and Zaireen also paid obeisance at the Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia (RA), located in the same compound. The Sajjadah Nasheen also performed the dastarbandi (traditional turban) of the Charge d' Affaires and group leader of the Zaireen.

PUC, HOAP reinforce Saudi directive: Private Hajj bookings through registered companies only

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Patron-in-Chief Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Sunday emphasized the pilgrims regarding private Hajj bookings through companies registered with the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia reinforcing the directive from Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

Addressing a press conference along with other HOAP representatives, including Saeed Ahmed Malik, Chaudhry Ehsanullah, Malik Abdul Khaliq, Chaudhry Muhammad Adil, Khalid Mahmood Bhatti, Pir Shafat Ahmed Boudla, Shahid Manzoor, and Zeeshan Qamar, he informed that private Hajj bookings were still open, with Hajj operation set to commence on May 9, and training sessions starting from May 5.

Ashrafi urged the pilgrims to focus solely on their religious duties and

refrain from engaging in political, sectarian, or communal activities, including raising slogans or displaying images in the Haramain Sharifain.

Ashrafi further highlighted the issue of individuals engaging in political and sectarian activities during their pilgrimage, urging the Pakistani government to take action against them.

He emphasized that training sessions for private pilgrims, organized by HOAP, would be conducted regularly in Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, with the code of conduct set to be issued next week.

Ashrafi also warned against fraudulent practices by unregistered companies on social media and fake websites, advising the public to book only through officially registered quota holders or tour operators.

Additionally, he announced that, in accordance with the instructions of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and with the efforts of Saudi Ambassador,



BEIJING: A group photo of Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Mr. Khalid Hashmi with panelists at Pakistan Professionals and Students Forum hosted by Pakistan Embassy.