

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti presiding over 16th meeting of Provincial Apex Committee

Peaceful Balochistan guarantor of stable Pakistan; we have to fight against terrorism together: CM

Independent Report

QUETTA: The 16th meeting of Provincial Apex Committee of Balochistan was held with the Chief Minister, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti in the chair here on Monday. The meeting was attended by the Corps Commander, Lt General Rahat Nasim Ahmed Khan, Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove, Chief Secretary, Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Chief Collector Customs, Abdul Qadir Memon, besides other concerned high ups. Certain important decisions were made about imprisonment in law and order, elimination of terrorism and smuggling and second phase of repatriation of illegal immigrants besides others. The meeting reviewed foolproof security of the CPEC projects and the Chinese nationals working on these

projects, and decided to strictly implement the proposed SOPs in this regard.

There was consensus in the meeting on starting activities at large scale for prevention of the smuggling by removing the administrative and legal flaws.

Besides, it was decided to take the result-oriented steps for prevention of two-way smuggling of sugar, fertilizer, patrol and diesel.

Moreover, the meeting also decided to prevent the smuggling of non-custom paid to Pakistan from the border area. The provincial Home department presented data about the illegal immigrants repatriated from Balochistan in its briefing.

The process of repatriation of more illegal immigrants to their country as per the guideline and decision of federal government was made conditional with the timeline decided. *Continued on page 2*

No peace in world without permanent peace in Gaza: PM

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday said permanent peace in Gaza was imperative for peace in the world. He was speaking at the plenary meeting of the special session of World Economic Forum on the theme of "Rejuvenating Growth". He said, "The world will not be in peace unless there is a permanent peace in Gaza."

As he talked about Gaza, the audience in the hall responded with resounding applause. He said the conflict in

Ukraine brought to the world skyrocketing commodity prices, and Pakistan could not import and procure vital raw materials for industry and agriculture. "On top of that inflation is breaking the back of developing countries," he said. Coupled with that, Pakistan faced devastation in 2022 due to huge unimaginable floods.

The prime minister said, "Pakistan is one of those countries which have nothing to do with the reasons leading to climate change. Our contribution to

emissions is not even fraction of one percent."

Due to the catastrophic floods in Pakistan, large swaths of land were submerged, millions of houses and animals were washed away, and stagnant water brought water borne diseases all across the country, he continued.

He said his government spent Rs 100 billion from scarce resources for relief and rehabilitation of the flood affectees.

"We are grateful to the

Continued on page 2

IMF approves disbursement of \$1.1 bn loan tranche

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday approved disbursement of \$1.1 billion last loan tranche, marking the successful end of the second bailout package in eight years but it took heavy toll in the shape of unbearable inflation and slowing economic wheel.

The Executive Board of the IMF approved the completion of the second review of the \$3 billion Standby Arrangement, confirmed the Ministry of Finance. This also paved the way for the release of the last loan tranche of \$1.1 bil-

lion. The IMF board also backed Pakistan's intent to get another bailout package to ensure 'permanency in economic stabilisation and deepen structural reforms'.

The global lender approved the completion of the second review of the arrangement hours after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the country's debt trap had become a 'death trap', calling it the biggest challenge for his government. He made these remarks while addressing the closing session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Calls on COAS

Turkish Commander lauds Pak Army's role in regional peace, stability

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commander Turkish Land Forces, General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir here at General Headquarters on Monday and appreciated the role of Pakistan Army in ensuring peace and stability in the region.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, during the meeting, matters of mutual interest and measures to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation were discussed.

However, they expressed satisfaction over deep-rooted relations between the two countries, based on historic, cultural and religious affinity. The COAS emphasized the need to further strengthen existing military to military cooperation between the two Armed Forces.

Earlier on arrival at GHQ, the Commander Turkish Land Forces, laid wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Army presented the guard of honour to the visiting dignitary.

Commander Turkish Land Forces General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu meeting with Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi

Justice Babar dismisses pleas seeking his recusal in audio leak case

ISLAMABAD (APP): Justice Babar Sattar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday dismissed the miscellaneous applications filed by PEMRA, FIA and PTA seeking his recusal from hearing the audio leaks cases.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 500,000 each on Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). However in an identical plea, it summoned Intelligence Bureau's (IB) joint director in personal capacity on next date of hearing, which would be announced later. The court was told that approval to file the miscellaneous plea was given by him.

Justice Babar Sattar heard the identical petitions pertaining to the audio leaks filed by Bushra Bibi and Najam Saqib. Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan and Additional Attorney General Munawar Duggal also appeared before the court.

Incumbent Parliament has no 'legitimate' position: JUI-F Chief

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman raising questions on the 'legitimacy' of the incumbent parliament has said that they have compromised on principles and "sold the democracy".

In his maiden address on floor of the National Assembly (NA) on Monday

after 2024 general elections, he expressed concerns over state of representation in Pakistan and asked whether this was really a people's representative parliament. Maulana Fazlur Rehman alleged that the governments were formed in palaces and bureaucrats decided who would be the Prime Minister.



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif speaks at a Closing Plenary-Rejuvenating Growth, at a Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum.

SC roster revised as CJ not to hear cases today

ISLAMABAD (INP): The roster of today's hearing in the Supreme Court (SC) was revised as Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa will not hear cases on Monday.

The SC registrar issued the revised roster moments before the commencement of the today's proceedings. The channel said the SC officials informed the litigants about the changes in the roster just before starting the hearing.

As per the channel report, Chief Justice (CJ) Qazi Faez Isa will conduct the Chamber Work today while Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, and Justice Athar Minallah will be included in Bench No 1.

Four terrorists gunned down in Tank operation

TANK (INP): Security forces personnel gunned down four terrorists during an operation in District Tank of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to a statement issued by the military's media wing Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Monday, the security forces launched the operation after receiving information about presence of the terrorists in the area.

The security forces cordoned off the area and launched a swift action which resulted into the death of four terrorists.

According to the ISPR, the slain terrorists were involved in a number of attacks against security forces and civilians. It may be mentioned here that a sessions judge, Shakirullah Marwat, was abducted while travelling from Tank to DI Khan on Sunday but he was recovered from North Waziristan district during the night.

Woman murdered for using mobile phone in Khuzdar

KHUZDAR (INP): A man in Balochistan district of Khuzdar has confessed on Monday to murdering his wife for using mobile phone.

Sources in district administration informed that the murder had happened about two weeks ago in Greesha area of Tehsil Zahri in Khuzdar District.

The sources said the investigation led to the discovery that the killer is the husband of the slain woman. Accused Rahmatullah allegedly confessed to killing his wife for using mobile phone.

Pakistan mulls introducing digital currency

RIYADH (INP): Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the government is considering the possibility of introducing digital currency within its borders.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum (WEF) special meeting in Riyadh, Finance Minister Aurangzeb expressed Pakistan's contemplation towards digital currency adoption.

"We generate Rs9.4 trillion in annual revenues, yet half of our economy re-

mains undocumented," he stated.

Aurangzeb further said that an agreement was signed with McKinsey on Friday to facilitate comprehensive digitalisation of the economy.

"They are going to come in and help us with the end-to-end digitalisation of our economy," the finance minister said.

FinMin Aurangzeb emphasized the urgent need to implement a framework for a green tax economy.

Pakistan, Malaysia to hold JMC this year to study markets, explore economic opportunities

RIYADH (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Monday met with Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato Seri Utama Haji Mohamad Bin Haji Hasan in which they reviewed the broad range of relations with a special focus on enhancing trade and investment ties.

In the meeting held on the sidelines of the Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) being held here, two sides agreed to hold the next round of Joint Ministerial Commission meeting in Islamabad during the year.

In the Joint Ministerial Commission meeting, the two sides will study the markets and take full advantage of the opportunities offered in various sectors for tangible economic

outcomes, according to a press release.



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Administrative secretaries of different provincial govt. departments transferred

QUETTA: The administrative secretaries of different provincial government departments have been transferred on Monday.

According to an official notification issued here by the services and General Administration Department (S&GAD) on Monday, Secretary Agriculture and Cooperatives Department, Sohailur Rehman Baloch has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD while Secretary Minorities, Dawood Khan Bazi has been transferred and posted as the Secretary Agriculture and Cooperatives.

Similarly, Director General Environmental Protection Agency, Muhammad Ibrahim has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD. Moreover, Muhammad Yasir Khan Bazi, serving as Deputy Commissioner Killa Saifullah, has been posted as Director General EPA.

and directed to report in the S&GAD. The Member Chief Minister Inspection Team, Abdul Rauf Baloch has been transferred and posted as Secretary Local Government department.

Similarly, Director General Environmental Protection Agency, Muhammad Ibrahim has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD while Secretary Minorities, Dawood Khan Bazi has been transferred and posted as the Secretary Agriculture and Cooperatives.

The Secretary Local Government, Noor Ahmed Pirani has been transferred

President confers NI (M) upon Commander Turkish Land Forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on



Monday conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) upon Commander of the Turkish Land Forces General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, in a special investiture ceremony held at the Aitwan-i-Sadr.

The ceremony was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, senior military leadership and other senior officials.

The Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) was conferred upon General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu in recognition of his illustrious services. *Continued on page 2*

Special anti-polio drive gets underway in Balochistan

Secretary Health formally inaugurates polio immunization campaign; pledges to eradicate polio virus from province with support of polio workers, parents and civil society

Independent Report

QUETTA: The special anti-polio campaign got underway in 30 districts of Balochistan province on Monday.

The Secretary Health, Abdullah Khan formally inaugurated the polio immunization campaign by administering anti-polio vaccine to the children at Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for Polio Eradication here.

Also present on the occasion were Coordinator of EOC, Syed Zahid Shah and other concerned officials besides the represen-

tatives of World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Speaking to the media persons after inauguration of the immunization campaign, Secretary Health said that the polio immunization campaign has been started in 30 districts of the province as part of our mission of saving our children from the polio virus.

During the campaign, more than 2,395 children below five years of age would be administered anti-polio campaign in 30 districts of the province, he mentioned adding that for

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QUETTA: Secretary Health Balochistan Abdullah Khan administering polio drop to a child to inaugurate anti-polio drive

Senators demand probe into social media propaganda on taxing solar consumers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Senators on Monday demanded the Upper House of the Parliament to direct for a probe into social media propaganda on government's alleged intention to tax solar power consumers.

PPPP Senator Palmas Mohammad Zai Khan while taking to the floor on point of order demanded the House to take note of the issue as social media hearsays led to huge outcry in the public already burdened by skyrocketing inflation and rise in gas and electricity tariffs.

Senator Khan said, "If there is any idea to tax solar power consuming households then it's tantamount to a conspiracy against the sitting government and an wise move that will further break the backbone of the masses already battered by price hike and poor economic situation."

She said the newspapers had given wide coverage to the story that forced the power division to issue an informal statement brushing aside all the claims levelled in the social media's misleading information.

Senator Palwasha Khan announced at the floor of the House that if there was going to be any such decision then it would be resisted from the floor.

"Pakistan has produced some 7,000 megawatts of

electricity from renewable energy sources in just eight months that gives huge impetus to shift over cheaper energy sources," she said.

Chipping in her discussion, PPPP Parliamentary leader in the Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said the issue surfaced on Saturday weekend that was against the state and country's ambitions and also the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Senator Rehman said she took to X formerly Twitter, to condemn the development and wrote three posts demanding the Prime Minister to take notice of the matter. She said it was not only the solar power units that were going to be charged but also the net metering system was going to be altered that would completely break this industry.

"There have been many calls and messages from green energy investing companies, diplomats and foreign missions investing in green energy initiatives in the country. They asked me that should we take our investment back or close our endeavours for renewables rollout," Senator Rehman said.

"The Power Ministry has furnished an informal statement rejecting all such allegations whereas it is pertinent that this should not have happened," she said.



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with Prime Minister of Malaysia H.E. Anwar Ibrahim.

PM, Saudi ministers discuss avenues of bilateral cooperation

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud, Minister of Energy, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Special Meeting in Riyadh on Monday.

The Saudi Energy Minister was accompanied by the chief executive officer & president of Aramco and the chairman of ACWA Power.

During the meeting, the prime minister highlighted the initiatives undertaken by the Government of Pakistan to facilitate and streamline processes for

investments in the country's energy sector.

He underscored various avenues available for energy cooperation between the two brotherly countries, which included building new and improving existing energy infrastructure, increasing focus on renewable energy, and bringing efficiencies across the entire energy eco-system.

The Saudi energy minister acknowledged deep historic fraternal ties between the two countries and highlighted the important role played by Pakistanis in the development of the Kingdom.

The Saudi side showed

keen interest in developing energy projects identified by the prime minister.

PM Shehbaz welcomed the interest by the Kingdom to enhance economic partnership with Pakistan. He said that following his meeting with Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman both sides were pursuing the economic cooperation agenda with a renewed vigour and commitment.

He expressed the hope that the technical teams of the two countries would complete their work and many mutually beneficial projects would be launched

soon.

The prime minister also applauded the vision of the Kingdom and the remarkable transformation that had taken place making Saudi Arabia a hub of economic growth and development.

Later, the prime minister held a meeting with Faisal Al-Ibrahim, Minister of Economy and Planning and Eng. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen Al-Fadley, Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, the prime minister appreciated the keen interest shown by

the Kingdom to explore ways and means to increase economic partnership between the two brotherly countries.

He highlighted the potential of Pakistani agriculture sector and underscored that Pakistan could become a bread basket for the Kingdom and play a critical role in ensuring food security not only for the two countries but for the entire region.

The Saudi minister for environment briefed the prime minister on the fruitful discussions that he and his delegation held in Islamabad on April 15-16.



QUETTA: A delegation of PPP meeting with Deputy Speaker Balochistan Assembly Ghazala Gola

Pakistan's Ashab wins Rochester Proam Squash in USA

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan emerging squash player Muhammad Ashab Irfan makes the country proud by winning the US 9000\$ Rochester Proam Squash Tournament by beating Gomez Dominguez of Mexico by 3-1 in the final held in Huston squash club, USA.

After months of hard work and dedication with special support from Houston Squash Club Ashab Irfan won his first PSA title as his achievement is even more notable

as he is only the second Pakistani player to win a PSA title outside of Pakistan in recent years, cementing his position as a rising star in the sport.

The second seed and world number 112 from Pakistan looked very energetic and aggressive during the final match of the tournament, Ashab squared off against Gomez Dominguez in a thrilling encounter as young Ashab emerged triumphant with a 3-1 victory, securing the title

with set scores of 12-10, 11-4, 9-11, and 11-9 during 60 minutes decisive game.

As the stakes heightened in the semi-final, Ashab Irfan faced a formidable opponent in Ronald Palamino of Columbia. Despite dropping two sets, Ashab displayed resilience and determination, ultimately prevailing with a hard-fought 3-2 victory. The set scores reflected the intensity of the match, with Irfan claiming victory with scores of 9-11, 11-9, 11-2, 4-11, and 11-4.

Deputy Director NAB (Balochistan) says Corruption is a scourge for which all institutions should adopt policy of self-accountability

QUETTA: On the invitation of PTC, NAB (Balochistan) arranged a lecture on "Corruption" to under training Police Officers at the Police Training College, Sariab Road Quetta.

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Balochistan organized a training lecture for the training officers at Police Training College Quetta regarding the Corruption. Deputy Director NAB (Balochistan) Mr. Khuram Shehzad delivered lecture which was attended by a large number of police personnel.



QUETTA: MPAs Maulana Hidayatur Rehman, Mir Asghar Rind and former Coordinator Malik Bilal Kakar meeting with Provincial Minister for Planning & Development Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buludi

Peaceful Balochistan...

Continued from page 1

Meanwhile, addressing the Apex committee meeting, Chief Minister said that peaceful Balochistan is guarantor of stable Pakistan.

He said that the war against terrorism is not of the Army and militants, rather it is all of us, and we have to fight it together.

The Chief Minister asserted that the killers of innocent people don't deserve any relaxation. We would strictly deal with those who have carried weapons, however, would go to homes of those Balochistanis who are angry, and would try to remove their reservations, he added.

The Chief Minister also said that we are setting positive direction for good governance in the province. The fruits of good governance would start reaching in five to six months, he added.

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti stressed that all of us have to play our role for betterment of the province.

Pakistan values Germany as significant global partner: ambassador

BERLIN (APP): Pakistan's ambassador to Germany Saqlain Syedah attended an event titled "Bridges of Hope-Munich welcomes Pakistan", as a key note speaker and panelist.

The aim of the program was to engage Pakistani community in Munich and also present Pakistan as a potential economic and cultural partner for the German public.

The ambassador briefed the audience regarding the endeavours to enhance ties with Germany particularly in fields of mobility of skilled and semi skilled labour from Pakistan into German companies to benefit both countries. She also noted that Pakistan offers an encouraging potential in sectors like renewable energy, IT, R&D and service sectors.

Other speakers included Hans-Joachim Gerber and Dr. Jamila Haq who briefed the audience about their social sector service projects undertaken by the NGO "Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe" in Pakistan. The said organisation undertakes a variety of social service programmes in areas of health, education, and infrastructure and disaster management.

The gathering was organized by the renowned community member and businessman Arslan Minhas. A large number of community members and German friends in Munich attended the event.



HUB: Deputy Commissioner Hub Rohana Gul Kakar inaugurating anti-polio drop

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(E-Bids Only)

The Director Electricity (North), Energy Department, Government of Balochistan invites E-bids from eligible bidders for execution of following work on the basis of TORs given in the bidding document with the Bid Security of 2% of estimated cost in shape of Bank Guarantee or Deposit a Call Bid Security 2%

S.No	Name of Work	E/Cost
1	PROV OF HOME SOLAR SYSTEM FOR UNION COUNCILS IN MUSLIM BAGH (OFF GRID AREAS) UNDER PSPDP 2895 Z2022-1646(2023-24) TSE-232404400713	100.00 M

The procurement shall be carried out in accordance with Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Rules, 2014. Eligibility: Presence in active tax payer list. The bidding firms must not be black listed by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Registration with Balochistan Revenue Authority. The bidder must complete one assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of Rs 70,000,000 of at least 3 subsequent Years showing Financial Capacity of the firm. Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council C-4 and above and specialized Code is EE-11(i) Solar Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage - Two Envelope Procedure Bid Security: The bid must accompany bid security in the form of Bank Guarantee/Deposit at call of 2% specified above in the name of Undersigned from a scheduled Bank Tender Documents: Tender documents can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk Issuance of tender documents Complete bidding document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk Last Date of bid submission: The bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 15th May, 2024 till 11.30 A.M through supplier dash board. Tender opening Time All tenders shall be opened on the same day at 12.30 P.M on EPPS System Address: Director General Electricity, Energy Department, Government of Balochistan, H# 108, Shah Nawaz Kurd Street, Saryab Road, Quetta Tel# 081-2442007 & Fax# 081-2452756

Director Electricity (North)
Energy Department
Government of Balochistan

PRQ No.2033/29-04-2024

President confers NI (M)....

Continued from page 1

Later, the visiting Commander of Turkish Land Forces, General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, also called on the President, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The meeting was also attended by the Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir.

The meeting discussed matters pertaining to defence cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Both sides emphasised the need for further expanding bilateral ties for the mutual benefit of Pakistan and Turkiye.

Talking to the Commander of Turkish Land Forces, the president said that Pakistan was proud of its relations with Turkiye, which had always supported Pakistan on core issues.

He expressed satisfaction over the collaboration between Pakistan and Turkiye on a number of projects that would further strengthen bilateral ties.

The president highlighted the need for increasing people-to-people contacts, as well as promoting cooperation in the areas of agriculture, education, art and culture to bring the people of Pakistan and Turkiye further closer.

He said that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was a true and sincere friend of Pakistan who had made telephonic calls to him on his election as well as at the beginning of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak.

This showed his commitment to broadening Pak-Turkiye ties, he added.

Commander of Turkish Land Forces General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu reiterated the desire to further improve defence cooperation with Pakistan.

He said that both countries could significantly contribute to the promotion of regional peace and stability.

The president congratulated the Commander of Turkish Land Forces on receiving the Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) and hoped that he would continue to play his role to further strengthen defence cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

According to citation read out in the ceremony, Turkish commander "is a sincere and close friend of Pakistan" and played a prominent role in promoting and strengthening the defence relations between two brotherly countries.

General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu is an officer of high intellect and his excellent administrative qualities earned him the reputation of being a courageous and professionally competent officer.

He had served on different military posts.

In recognition of his excellent services and outstanding achievements, he was promoted to the rank of General in 2021 and appointed as commander of Turkish Land Forces in August 2023.

Jahanzeb Khan, owner of Houston Squash Club said that Ashab Irfan is the second Pakistani player who win the PSA title in abroad is being supported by Houston Squash Club and we are very happy that the young squash players who are making Pakistan name bright in the world.



Deputy Director NAB Mr. Khuram Shehzad delivering lecture to the Police Officers at Police Training College Quetta.

No peace in world without...

Continued from page 1

friendly countries including Saudi Arabia, Gulf countries, the United Kingdom, the United States and many other countries for their support at a difficult time.

Pakistan's economy suffered losses of 30 billion dollars because of the floods and then it approached international entities in Geneva and other places and had to borrow loans at expensive rates due to the natural disaster which was not its fault, he mentioned. "Our country was hit in a way which I had not seen in my life time," he remarked.

He gave the example of his family to express his determination and resolve to put Pakistan on the road to progress and prosperity.

He said his father and his brothers were sons of a poor farmer in undivided India and they migrated to Lahore, Pakistan at the time of partition. With the sheer dint of hard work, in 1965 his father and family raised the largest steel engineering company in Pakistan but it was nationalized on January 2, 1972, he said, adding his family stood up and accepted the challenge and in next 18 months set up six new small factories to avoid further nationalization.

He said global north and south were dependent on each other and had to work together to face the present challenges. The prime minister said after taking over reins of the country early this year, he was determined to put things in order.

Talking about the issues facing Pakistan, he said the power sector was in a shambles due to massive electricity theft and an elitist culture was doling out to those who did not deserve it. He told that for the first time in the country's history after getting credible input from agencies he removed high level officers who were not functioning well and had grey records.

"Our revenue sector is in tatters and what we receive annually in revenue, we lose four times due to leakages in the system. Unless we plug loopholes we will not recover from our problems in revenue collection," he explained. He said there were also problems of inflation and debt trap

which was a "death trap".

He said, "I acknowledge from the core of my heart the support of Saudi leadership for Pakistan for overcoming economic challenges. A friend in need is a friend indeed."

He appreciated the UK's Department for International Development for its outstanding support for Pakistan in sectors of health and education in the past.

He said his government was going for deep rooted structural reforms and meaningful austerity.

Pakistan had a very young population - millions of boys and girls - which was not only a challenge but also a great opportunity, he added.

"Youth is our biggest asset and we have to provide them will modern tools and technology including education in information technology and artificial intelligence and vocational training so that they can become self earners and establish small and medium size businesses and contribute in the nation building efforts in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia."

He said that the polio virus reached Balochistan again after reaching Karachi and Afghanistan.

Syed Zahid Shah ruled out element of negligence in reporting of the polio cases in the two districts of Balochistan. He said that the polio cases have not been reported because of negligence of anyone.

He said that we are trying to convey the message through media to the parents who are refusing the polio vaccination to their children.



GWADAR: Additional Deputy Commissioner General Tabish Baloch presiding over polio review meeting

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation of previous advertisement Published in daily newspapers Vide AB No.416 2024 please note the following correction. Last date and time of bid submission is changed from 30th April 2024 to 6th May 2024 11:00 AM. Bids will be open on same day at 12:00 PM. Other terms and conditions will remain same and unchanged.

AB No.426/29-4-2024

Project Director, Balochistan Medical Support Program-Poverty Eradication Initiative.

www.dpr.gov.pk @dpr_gov @dpr_gov @dpr_gov @dpr_gov

CORRIGENDUM

The NIT of the following development scheme is uploaded on BPPRA website having TSE232404390563 and also advertised in daily newspaper Quetta vide PRQ No.1868/16-04-2024 dated 17th April, 2024 the tender has to be opened on 30-04-2024, but now the tender opening date is hereby extended and the new tentative date of the tender opening is 09-05-2024.

Sr. No.	Name of Scheme	Amount
1	ESTAB. OF CHRISTIAN STUDY CENTER AND MASTER JOHNSON ASHRAF MEMORIAL DIGITAL LIBRARY AT QUETTA. PSDP No.5325	35,000 Million

SENIOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Local Government & Rural Development
Quetta.

PRQ No.2034/29-04-2024

www.dpr.gov.pk @dpr_gov @dpr_gov @dpr_gov @dpr_gov

Amir Muqam calls for performance over politics, criticizes opposition tactics

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government over resource allocation, he highlighted the equitable distribution through the National Finance Commission (NFC) award. The minister questioned the chief minister's insistence on federal funds, emphasizing adherence to established financial mechanisms. Speaking here in the National Assembly, he urged the Opposition to adopt a constructive approach rather than disrupting proceedings with confrontational tactics. He criticized the KP provincial government's failure and its stubborn attitude to fill 11 vacant seats in the Senate, stressing the importance of ensuring adequate representation for province in the House of Federation (Senate). The minister lamented the underperformance of the KP province compared to Punjab and Sindh, calling for a learning curve from their development models. About the blames of the KP Chief Minister on

the federal government over resource allocation, he highlighted the equitable distribution through the National Finance Commission (NFC) award. The minister questioned the chief minister's insistence on federal funds, emphasizing adherence to established financial mechanisms. Speaking here in the National Assembly, he urged the Opposition to adopt a constructive approach rather than disrupting proceedings with confrontational tactics. He criticized the KP provincial government's failure and its stubborn attitude to fill 11 vacant seats in the Senate, stressing the importance of ensuring adequate representation for province in the House of Federation (Senate). The minister lamented the underperformance of the KP province compared to Punjab and Sindh, calling for a learning curve from their development models. About the blames of the KP Chief Minister on

of facing legal cases with resilience instead of resorting to empty slogans. Reflecting on the conduct of former Prime Minister, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in the face of legal decisions, Amir Muqam commended his commitment to peace and tranquility. Despite adverse court rulings, Sharif refrained from inciting agitation and consistently advocated for the welfare of the people. He stated that individuals previously involved in attacking Parliament and Pakistan Television, stirring unrest, were now discussing similar disruptive actions. However, he affirmed that such actions would not be tolerated this time, emphasizing the rule of law. The minister also cited damages to the Malakand toll plaza, a school in Dir, and other critical locations on May 9 and asserted that the public was aware of the true perpetrators behind these incidents.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurating Islamabad Traffic Police Facility on Wheels & Islamabad Traffic Police Education on Wheels.

Mohsin Naqvi inaugurates mobile facilitation and education service

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: According to details, the Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi has successfully implemented another important initiative for the convenience of the residents of the federal capital, a public relations officer said. He said that the Interior Minister inaugurated the Islamabad Traffic Police public facilitation and education mobile service and inspected and reviewed the facilities provided to citizens to get the license. In this regard a ceremony was held at F-9 park, which was attended by the Federal Interior Minister as chief guest while, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi along with senior police officers were also present. On this occasion, the Federal Interior Minister stated that Islamabad Traffic

Police will now issue driving licenses to residents from any part of the country and licenses for people over 70 years of age in the federal capital will be issued at their homes. He further emphasized providing every possible facility to the residents of Islamabad with a priority on facilitating college and university students with services for obtaining and renewing licenses and learner permits at their educational institutions. Moreover, the aim of this service is to save students time from visiting traffic offices and waiting in queues, he maintained. However, the Federal Interior Minister has announced the commencement of work to rid Islamabad of drugs and offenses. Islamabad will adhere to the Supreme Court's decision regarding offenses and ensuring no tolerance for any transgressions.

The Islamabad Traffic Police has been directed to issue licenses to citizens from any part of the country residing in Islamabad, without requiring them to return if their temporary or permanent address is outside Islamabad. He further said that, the welfare of police martyrs' families and officers is also among the top priorities. He asserted that all police stations in Islamabad will undergo significant changes within three months. He said that, under the leadership of IGP Islamabad, police are taking action against drug use in educational institutions throughout Islamabad and arresting drug peddlers. On this occasion, IGP Islamabad said that this mobile service van will adhere to the motto of "serving citizens with convenience," providing services to citizens in Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Lady Health workers administering polio drops during Anti Polio drive in the Holy Shrine of Bari Imam Sarkar R.A in the Federal Capital.

Capital police to exercise zero tolerance policy against street crimes, drug abuse

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi Monday said that Capital police had launched an aggressive campaign for adopting a zero-tolerance policy against street crimes and drug abusers. Talking to a Private news channel, he vowed that the capital police with its full dedication will improve their performance and take innovative steps to further improve the overall law and order situation to curb street crimes by concentrating on the hotspots. He urged the citizens to come forward and lodge their complaints against such policemen, who would not be tolerated in the police force. He said that a seven-day special campaign should be started to eliminate crimes. All police officers will target criminal groups and expedite crackdowns on drug trafficking

and a special campaign will be launched against professional beggars. Replied to a query, he said that Islamabad Police has launched a special awareness campaign titled "Nasha Ab Nahe" to eradicate narcotics from the federal capital and to safeguard the youth from the menace of narcotics. As part of this initiative, the Police officers are conducting special awareness drives in schools, colleges and universities regarding the dangers of narcotics and measures for prevention and control, he added. He also stressed the youngsters for joining the drive and said the sale of drugs, especially hashish and ice, has now become common in colleges and schools. Capital Police is committed and formulating an action plan against the "drug mafia" and a grand operation has been launched against culprits involved in crimes.

Ayaz extends felicitation to Dar on his appointment as deputy PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Monday extended felicitation to Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister. In his felicitation message, the Speaker said that appointment of Senator Ishaq Dar as Deputy Prime Minister indicated the trust on his political sagaciousness and his seasoned leadership, said a news release. He said that Ishaq Dar's appointment as Deputy Prime Minister would lead Pakistan on a new path of progress and prosperity.

Mehbooba asks people to give verdict against abrogation of Article 370

ISLAMABAD (APP): PDP President Mehbooba Mufti has asked people to exercise their adult-franchise to make their voices reach the Indian Parliament and convey to the BJP-led decision taken on August 5, 2019 to abrogate Article 370 was wrong and had to be revoked at all costs. The Kashmir Media Service reported that Mehbooba also warned against any move to postpone the south Kashmir constituency elections.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Syed Mehdi Shah and Chief Minister GB, Gul Bar Khan called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President urges steps to promote local businesses for GB's self-sufficiency

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday stressed the need for steps to promote local businesses and economic activities to make Gilgit Baltistan (GB) self-sufficient as well as for inclusive and sustainable development in the area. The president, in a meeting with GB Governor Syed Mehdi Shah and Chief Minister Gul Bar Khan, who called on him here, said the GB had enormous hydroelectric potential that needed to be capitalized for its development. He said that GB was blessed with abundant natural resources, including min-

ing, gems, and minerals, and called for their full exploration and development to bring economic prosperity to the area. During the meeting, the GB governor and chief minister informed the president about the development projects being undertaken by the GB government. They also appraised President Zardari of various issues facing the GB people, particularly the lack of education and health facilities, and unemployment. They also requested the president to visit GB and address the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly.

Emphasizing the constitutional reforms, the GB governor also pointed out the issues facing the universities and requested for president's special attention for their resolution. President Zardari underlined the need to initiate programs for the training and skill development of GB's youth to equip them with employable skills as per market demand. He called for accelerating infrastructure development in GB as well as focusing on strengthening the education and health sectors to bring it at par with other developed areas of the country.

MoCC&EC, HEC mull over climate change inclusion into national curriculum: Romina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Monday said the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination was mulling over inclusion of climate change as part of the national curriculum with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) to start climate awareness at the grassroots level. Prime Minister's Coordinator expressed these views at the launching ceremony of Pakistan's Roadmap on Plastics. She said the nation must cope with climate change together as it had to learn from each other's experiences. Romina Khurshid said she has demonstrated zero tolerance on the use of single-use plastics and strictly adhered to the avoidance of drinking water in plastic bottles. "Aquatic life is also in trouble because of plastics that demands urgent action and responsibility of all as individuals towards shunning the one-time use plastics," she said. The Minister underscored that Pakistan is among the 175 countries of the UN which have signed the agreement.

IHC adjourns PTI founder's bail plea

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday adjourned hearing of a bail petition of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder in 190 million pounds Al-Qadir Trust scam case. IHC bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri heard the bail petition. Defence lawyers Barrister Salman Safdar and Shehbaz Khosa appeared before the court, while National Accountability Court Prosecutor Amjad Perwaiz could not attend the proceedings.



ISLAMABAD: PM's coordinator on climate change & Environmental coordination Romina Khurshid Alam in a group photo during a launching ceremony of WEF's National plastic action partnership held at COMSATS wherein more than 12 countries ambassadors participated.

Ministry unveils innovations to enhance Hajj facilities, introduces short-term package

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary, Religious Affairs, Dr. Syed Atta-ur-Rehman on Monday shed light on crucial aspects pertaining to the upcoming Hajj with a focus on optimizing the pilgrimage experience and addressing pertinent concerns delineating the ministry's strategies and innovations. Addressing a press conference along with other officials here, he commended the discourse by acknowledging the challenges encountered in fully utilizing the Hajj quota in preceding years. Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman, expressing unwavering determination, underscored the imperative of maximizing the utilization of the Hajj quota in the ensuing year, highlighting the repercussions of under utilization, which could potentially lead to a reduction in the quota for future years. Dispersing misconceptions surrounding the number of pilgrims under the government scheme, he clarified that there had been no reduction in pilgrim numbers this year. Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman said there was the reduction in per capita allocation by Rs. 100,000 compared to the previous year, prompting concerted efforts to alleviate financial burdens, including fee reductions imposed by airlines. He emphasized the ministry's commitment to enhancing the pilgrimage experience outlining a series of innovative initiatives introduced for the upcoming pilgrimage season. He said notable among these innovations was the introduction of short-term Hajj packages spanning 20 to 25 days, complementing the traditional 40-day pilgrimage.

Police launch 24/7 drive-through facility: SSP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Muhammad Sarfraz Virk of Islamabad on Monday have launched a 24/7 drive-through facility "Police Mobile Facilitation service" for students and egg citizens at their door steps. According to a private news channel he said that already-provided services will now be available to the student and senior citizens at their door steps round the clock. They will also be able to avail new services including renewal of driving license through the drive-through facility, he added. ITP facilitation on wheel and ITP education on wheel were the two facilities provide at their door steps. Our primary focus will be the student and the educational institutions to facilitate the students to avail their new as well as renewal of license.



ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jam at Islamabad Expressway in the Federal Capital.

NADRA 'doorstep service' bringing improvement in CNIC issuance system

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) "doorstep service" is not only bringing improvement in the CNIC issuance system but also simplifies the process. The differently-abled citizens can get their digital IDs without much disturbance through doorstep services, said an official of NADRA here Monday. Talking to APP Muhammad Shakeel, said that effort highlights NADRA's commitment to inclusion and its strong dedication to providing CNICs at people's doorsteps particularly those who have some physical issues or disability. The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) official, while giving a briefing to the press, said that the initiative is focusing on NADRA's objective of empowering people with disabilities. He highlighted how the community will be a great beneficiary of this service, ensuring the accessibility and diversity. He further said that the objective was first implemented in 2009, adding that Special CNIC services has long been recognized as an important tool in Pakistan to close the gap and guarantee the rights and benefits of PWDS. NADRA's dedication to inclusivity and empowerment is verified by the Special Helpline 1777, created to act as a centralized support hub and offer comprehensive assistance and guidance on NADRA's identification services, including the home-based CNIC issuing process. He added that through this programme, NADRA officers personally visit homes where they verify documents, capture biometric data, and finally issue CNICs, for ensuring equality in obtaining a key identification document for the disabled population.



ISLAMABAD: Mrs. Marilina Armellini, Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, calls on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Ahad Khan Cheema.

Italy reaffirms commitment to support poverty alleviation, rural development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, Marilina Armellini, during a call on meeting with Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Khan Cheema Monday reaffirmed her country's unwavering commitment to support Pakistan in poverty reduction and rural development, technical and vocational training, cultural heritage and agriculture. According to press statement issued by Economic Affairs Division (EAD), she apprised the minister of the implementation progress of the on-going development portfolio funded by the Italy, including special assistance package provided in the wake of the catastrophic 2022 floods. She said, government of Italy would be continuously supporting Pakistan for economic development activities. The ambassador was accompanied by Head of Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), Francesco Zatta and First Secretary of the Embassy of Italy, Augusto Palmieri.

Backward areas uplift among govt top priorities: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Communications Minister Abdul Aleem Khan said on Monday that the government's top priority is the welfare of the masses, and it is using huge funds to reduce poverty and unemployment and uplift backward areas of the country. Talking to a private news channel, he said that the government's working on upgrading communication, education, and health sectors and generating new economic activities. The minister said that the government is focused on long-term development projects that will benefit the country's economy. "This government is sensitive to the aspirations of every section of society, saying that cutting-edge communication systems will also become more attractive for both domestic and foreign investments. Replied to a question, he stressed the need for responsible governance that would not only ensure stability but also embrace reform and adapt to changing external environments. He said that a strong infrastructure was necessary to achieve the task of development in any country in the world.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, meets with Mohamed Yahya of Somalia United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan.

Polio drive in full swing: ICT admins oversees campaign activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): All the Assistant Commissioners of the Federal Capital were actively engaging with polio teams to ensure the success of the a seven-day anti-polio drive which started on Monday in ICT. This proactive involvement aligned with the directives from Islamabad's Deputy Commissioner and the Additional Deputy Commissioner East, said the Spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory Administration, Dr Abdullah Tabassum here. In this regard, the Assistant Commissioners from across the city have visited different locations to oversee the polio teams' activities. At Jinnah Garden, Assistant Commissioner Sadder area, Ms Mehreen joined the morning assembly, where she discussed the day's goals and addressed issues concerning polio vaccinations. She emphasized meeting the targets, addressing "not available" (NA) cases, and handling refusals to ensure maximum coverage. Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Nellora area, Uzir Ahmad participated in the morning briefing at I-8 area. During this session, he reviewed the first day's planning and addressed any complaints or concerns related to the polio campaign. Similarly, in the Industrial Area, Assistant Commissioner, Farwa Batool checked in on the polio teams at UCG-15, issuing additional guidance to enhance their operations. This focused approach aimed at streamline the vaccination process and solve any logistical issues.

Weathering the storm

The year 2023 is a sobering reminder of the tumultuous relationship Asia has with climate change and how this change appears to be gaining momentum each year. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, Asia bore the brunt of climate and weather disasters last year, with temperatures in the region climbing almost 2°C above the historical average. This warming has led to more frequent and severe weather phenomena, from debilitating heatwaves to devastating floods. Pakistan finds itself grappling with these realities early this year.

The National Disaster Management Authority has issued warnings of ongoing severe weather conditions likely to persist until April 29, including potential flooding and storms that threaten to disrupt lives and livelihoods. These alerts come in the wake of a series of weather-induced calamities since February that have inflicted significant damage, with the death toll rising and infrastructure strained. This escalating frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters makes evident the need for Asian countries to bolster their meteorological capabilities and disaster preparedness.

For Pakistan, the challenge is twofold. Firstly, there is a pressing need to enhance the capacity and resources of the NDMA and provincial meteorological departments. This means investing in advanced forecasting technologies and expanding early warning systems to ensure timely and accurate weather updates. Secondly, we need a strategy for climate resilience. This would involve building and updating infrastructure to withstand extreme weather, ensuring sustainable agricultural practices so our food sources remain secure, and empowering local populations through community-based disaster-risk management programmes. Every citizen must be made aware of their role in disaster preparedness and response. Moreover, the plight of farmers, highlighted by recent storms affecting the wheat harvest in Punjab, makes a strong case for agricultural reforms. Policies that support crop insurance, improve access to weather-resistant seed varieties, and promote water conservation techniques are vital. Such reforms will help stabilise agricultural output and safeguard farmers' incomes against the caprices of climate.

On a regional level, Asian countries must work closely on climate action initiatives. Sharing technology, knowledge, and strategies can amplify individual efforts and lead to regional resilience. Global cooperation, too, is key. Developed nations need to support vulnerable regions through funding, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives.

The writing is on the wall. The time for incremental steps is over. The scale of the challenge requires bold, decisive actions that reflect the urgency of the moment. For Pakistan, and Asia at large, building resilience is no longer a matter of choice but a necessity for survival in an era marked by unprecedented climatic upheaval. As we advance through 2024, let this be the year when we all proactively ensure that our communities are safeguarded and that the future is secure against the inevitable next storm.

Umair Javed

Analyses of the ongoing Indian election mostly focus on the scale of the BJP's expected victory rather than the identity of the winner. The ruling party is similarly confident of its return to power, with a campaign target set at 400-plus seats in a 543-seat Lok Sabha. Anything close to this number would give it the largest majority of any Indian government since Congress in 1984, in the aftermath of Indira's assassination.

That the Modi-led BJP has managed to carve out and then extend its single-party dominance is one of the most important trends of electoral politics anywhere in the world. After the rise of lower-caste and regional parties, political analysis of India from the late 1990s and early 2000s repeatedly talked about the permanence of fractured mandates and coalition politics.

The BJP's rise in the last decade or so invalidates many of these predictions. Its dominance of national politics has deepened during this time. The Hindi

heartland of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya, and Uttar Pradesh is practically a one-party region. There is no clear nationwide alternative, and opposition parties succeed mostly in state assembly elections in the southern states.

Explanations for the BJP's rise and the reconfiguration of Indian politics offer both cultural and economic factors. Its strategy of tactical polarisation in key constituencies, through communal rhetoric and violence, helps consolidate upper-, middle-, and lower-caste Hindu voters behind one party, whereas previously, these groups may have voted for different candidates.

The same strategy is at play once more, as witnessed in Modi's recent scaremongering speech about how the opposition, if voted into government, planned to use an inheritance tax to appropriate Hindu property and distribute them among Muslims.

Earlier work by sociologist Manali Desai also points out how the BJP in Gujarat used the memory of violence of the early 2000s, which was of its own making, to project itself as a pro-

ceptor of Hindus against the threat of Muslim resurgence. Regardless of the fact that Muslim populations remain ghettoised and entirely disempowered, this rhetoric has both shaped and taken advantage of general material and personal insecurities, especially among middle- and lower-caste Hindus.

In more recent times, the BJP has also made inroads in places that were seen to be immune from divisive polarisation, such as Kerala. While it is still some way from winning an election there, the BJP's popularity among Dalit voters has grown considerably. The fact that a party dominated by upper-caste Hindus is getting votes from lower-caste groups deserves more explanation. Incisive analysis by Samantha Agarwal on this issue points to the tactical use of caste-centric rhetoric that portrays the BJP as a defender of lower-caste interests in a region where secularist and leftist parties have failed to improve their material conditions.

The tactical flexibility of using upper-caste imagery and religious scaremongering in Hindi-belt states and lower-caste

appeals outside of it show the BJP's adeptness at using cultural factors for its advantage. But part of its success also rests on economic factors. Here, higher headline rates of GDP growth, and a state-curated perception of the country doing well globally, are also key in shaping the pre-election environment.

Political popularity attributed to GDP growth deserves further scrutiny. It is well documented that inequality has increased in India over the last few decades. As per The World Inequality Report, the top one per cent of the population now holds about 33pc of national wealth while the bottom half of the population holds about 6pc; in 1991, these shares were 16pc and 9pc respectively.

If high rates of growth are mostly advantageous to a small set of the population, why then does the rest of the electorate vote for the ruling party on its basis? One persuasive answer is that high rates of growth, and visible prosperity for some, creates greater desire and aspiration among middle-class segments. There is a prevail-

ing sentiment, managed and curated by the BJP, that if these select few can succeed, the economy will eventually work for us as well. In other words, trickle-down economics has been turned into a dominant idea in India.

At the same time, lower-income groups have been won over through targeted distribution of welfare schemes. The welfare provision work carried out by its Hindu fundamentalist affiliates, notably the RSS, reaps electoral dividends for the BJP. This is well documented by authors such as Tariq Thachil in his book *Elite Parties, Poor Voters*.

In more recent years, the BJP has also laid claim to reducing poverty by a significant degree. Disagreements between economists on this issue, dubbed the 'Great Indian Poverty Debate', previously contested the extent and reasoning behind this decline, though there is now increasing consensus that poverty reduction has taken place.

In a recent piece on the same topic, economists Maitreesh Ghatak and Rishabh Kumar agree that there has been an uptick in

household-level consumption among the poorest segment of the population, which can at least partially be explained by the expansion of public welfare programmes following Covid-19.

To this end, they provide the example of the 'prime minister's food support plan (PMKAY)', which built on the pre-existing National Food Security Act to provide rice and pulses to 800 million people at zero cost. The increase in the Government of India's food subsidy bill between 2019-20 and 2020-21 was nearly fivefold and the net amount of the subsidy remained structurally higher every year since 2020.

This mix of divisive cultural politics and growth-oriented economics that feeds Hindu middle-class ambition and provides targeted welfare are key ingredients in the BJP's political trajectory. Unless a major upset happens, this agenda looks set to deliver an expanded majority for the party. And in the process, India is likely to take one more step towards a one-party form of government. -- Courtesy Dawn

Protecting free speech

Dr Naazir Mahmood

When Pakistan's greatest war for freedom of expression was raging in the dark decade of General Ziaul Haq in the late 1970s, Ahfaz-ur-Rahman and Nasir Zaidi were at the forefront with their leaders Minhaj Barna and Nisar Usmani.

In April 2020, during the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic in Pakistan, Ahfaz bhai lost his battle against cancer. His death was a huge loss to Pakistan's journalist community, and his colleagues, friends and, of course, students such as myself mourned him with deep sorrow.

Ahfaz's family - wife Mahnaz Rahman and children Rameez and Tabinda - launched an award in his name, the Ahfaz Memorial Award for lifetime achievement in journalism. This year, Nasir Zaidi received the award.

When the climate for journalism darkens in the country, we remember the likes of Ahfaz-ur-Rahman. He was an irrepressible source of competence and courage for us. Whenever Ahfaz bhai realized that a benign voice was not

enough to defend freedom of expression in the country, he would take to the streets with a loud and powerful roar.

Ahfaz-ur-Rahman began his career in the mid-1960s when the first military dictator General Ayub Khan was at his peak, controlling the mighty state machinery. He allegedly rigged the 1965 presidential elections against Fatima Jinnah and was planning to rule forever.

But there were democrats and journalists who could challenge him, and as a young journalist, Ahfaz-ur-Rahman was closely observing the stalwarts of journalism who could stand up to challenge the dictator and his allies who had imposed restrictions on free expression.

Ayub's seemingly indestructible regime was crumbling, and China's Cultural Revolution was in full swing when Ahfaz-ur-Rahman moved to China to work there as a journalist and translator. His two-year stint ended in 1969 when General Ayub's regime came tumbling down only to vault another general to power.

In the 1970s, Ahfaz-ur-Rahman worked for

various newspapers and magazines such as 'Al-Fatah' and 'Musawat'. By the time General Zia toppled ZA Bhutto's elected government and dissolved parliament unconstitutionally, Ahfaz-ur-Rahman had already become a dynamic follower of Minhaj Barna and Nisar Usmani and a leader of journalists in his own right.

Thus began the war against General Zia's arbitrary censorship, leading to the arrests of hundreds of journalists. Ahfaz-ur-Rahman was imprisoned, and Nasir Zaidi was one of the four journalists sentenced to public lashing.

Years later, Ahfaz-ur-Rahman documented this struggle in his invaluable book 'Sab se bari jang' which is now also available in English. His last major battle for freedom of expression was against General Musharraf's dictatorship in the first decade of the 21st century. By the time Ahfaz bhai closed his eyes in 2020, he had penned over a dozen books, completed dozens of translations, wrote hundreds of features, and inspired millions of his readers.

Ahfaz-ur-Rahman

was also an Urdu poet of considerable reputation with his poems concerning a wide range of political and social issues. He was interested in history, international affairs, politics, literature, and so many other disciplines. His heartfelt affiliation with the victims of atrocities around the world is reflected in his poems. Be it Kashmir or Palestine, Vietnam or Cambodia and Chile, he wrote about the people who struggled for democracy and freedom. This is the reason the Rahman family decided to institute an award for free speech that four journalists have won so far: Amar Jaleel, Asma Shirazi, Hussain Naqi and Nasir Zaidi.

Every year, at the award ceremony, an eminent scholar or journalist delivers an Ahfaz memorial lecture at the Art Council auditorium in Karachi, generously provided by Ahmed Shah.

Dr Jaffer Ahmed delivered the first lecture in 2022. In 2023 the award committee requested Amar Sindhu and Mazhar Abbas to deliver lectures. Last year, the committee also decided to honour some

outstanding mass communication students from Federal Urdu University. This year, the theme of the ceremony was Palestine and the partisanship of Western media against Palestinian victims of Israeli rage.

Zarrar Khuhrro who has emerged as a powerful voice of sane journalism in Pakistan delivered this year's lecture on April 20, 2024. He highlighted the duplicity of Western media while covering the ongoing war on an oppressed people in the Middle East. He termed the war a misnomer as it is more of a genocide than an ordinary war between two standing armies. "In fact, it is a war on speech in which Western media is blatantly complicit."

He debunked the perception that Western media is superior to the media in developing countries in any true sense of independent reporting. "There is no need to feel any inferiority complex in front of Western media." Instead of being objective and impartial or neutral, Western media has crossed all limits in hiding facts.

They use expressions giving a milder touch to

atrocities that are more barbaric than any other war in recent history. In a way, they are complicit in the genocide that they refuse to acknowledge. Zarrar exposed the role Western media has been playing in opinion formation that favours Israel and provokes people against Palestinians. "Israel kept achieving its goals thanks to highly favourable Western media that gave a monstrous look to Palestinians and presented Israeli forces as waging a just war." Western media does not treat Palestinian victims as human beings, portraying them as animals that deserve instant death.

He reminded the audience of multiple incidents in which some top-ranking newspapers dehumanized Palestinians depicting them as animals or rodents. While thousands of Palestinians become targets of Israeli genocide, most of Western media has not displayed any serious sympathy for starving mothers and dying children. "Many Western anchors start questioning a Palestinian guest by asking if they condemn Hamas." -- Courtesy TheNews

Stirring monster

Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Last month's attack on a Moscow concert hall garnered global media attention, highlighting the rapidly expanding capabilities of the militant Islamic State. The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan has provided opportunities for militant groups to revisit their policies and targets, resulting in a surge in terrorism. In the South Asia region, in addition to ideological affiliates of Al Qaeda, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) now poses a significant threat.

Since its formation in 2015, ISKP has extended its influence in South Asia and is experiencing a resurgence enabled by the post-US withdrawal situation. Although the group was forced in 2019 to surrender control of territory it once held in northern and eastern Afghanistan, it has shifted its focus to urban warfare and has since executed numerous lethal attacks. It is also striving to broaden its geographic scope beyond Afghanistan by attracting talent from existing extremist networks.

A central body, the General Directorate of Provinces, is entrusted by the IS to coordinate regional affiliates. The GDP has a dedicated bureau for South Asia called the Maktabal-Saddiq. Reportedly, ISKP maintains communication with its local leadership, but local formations also exercise operational autonomy. ISKP seems flexible in its ambitions, operations, and ties with other militant groups. This is why, after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and despite the arrests and killings of its members, ISKP remains a significant threat.

The ISKP's strategy can be divided into two

phases: from 2015 to late 2019, its strategy was to gain territory and consolidate control. However, by 2019, ISKP was facing intense pressure and consequently lost territorial control, which proved to be a significant setback. In the second phase, from 2020 onwards, it began focusing on urban warfare. This change of strategy came with the objective of eroding the legitimacy of the Afghan Taliban among the locals. The shift was followed by attacks on the Nangarhar prison, a funeral procession in Nangarhar, and attacks on local Shias and students at Kabul University.

In the 2020 attack on Nangarhar Jail, carried out by 11 suicide bombers, 1,000 prisoners were released, including 280 ISKP members. Subsequently, the number of ISKP attacks in Afghanistan increased from 83 in 2020 to 334 in 2021. Two weeks after the exit of US troops from Afghanistan, the attack on Kabul airport resulted in 170 deaths.

Initially, ISKP recruitment was done primarily from areas around the Pak-Afghan border, from where it attracted former TTP fighters with Salafi linkages and sectarian influences. The ISKP's territorial losses in Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover have since changed recruitment patterns, and the group has consequently tried to attract militants on the pretext that the Taliban betrayed the jihadi cause and hence it is the only viable option to be associated with.

The ISKP also intends to expand in the periphery, including India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. However, it has struggled with ground operations. The presence of Myanmar's disenfranchised Rohingya popula-

tion in Bangladesh offers the potential for the recruitment of sympathisers. In Bangladesh, the one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar (52 per cent of whom are children) have already been targeted by the ISKP; however, the group withdrew when faced with the wrath of counterterrorism (CT) operations.

Denying space to violent non-state actors in poor or disaster-affected communities is critical. States should invest more funds in eradicating illiteracy and developing vocational skills in order to deter employment within militant groups within poor communities, and strengthen relief operations and improve the well-being of disaster victims in order to discourage employment within disaster-affected communities.

Since the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the ISKP has not faced the same pressure from CT operations, but it has still not seemed very successful in expanding its influence in South Asia. The primary reason for its inability is its confinement to Afghanistan, the availability of a smaller number of foreign fighters to join ISKP, and its lack of success in establishing an operational hierarchy outside Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, the ISKP is trying to take advantage of the withdrawal of US troops, weak governance, isolated administration, absence of an organised CT apparatus, use of technology, latest propaganda techniques, and the vacuum created due to a fractured Al Qaeda.

The question remains: are the great powers intent on stopping it in its tracks, or will the threat be allowed to return? -- Courtesy Dawn

Campus protests

Huma Yusuf

The world has been watching as police storm US university campuses to arrest pro-Palestine supporters. This is an uncomfortable escalation of mounting surveillance and censorship at campuses after months of a growing crackdown: cancellations of poetry readings and talks, social media campaigns against students and faculty, dismissals of university presidents, suspension of pro-Palestine student groups.

The mass arrests of students and clearing of encampments has ignited calls for another free speech movement on US campuses, akin to the one in the 1950s against the excesses of McCarthyism. Calls to defend the right of students to protest are mounting globally, and recalling how such activism in the past helped ensure just outcomes ranging from the Vietnam War to South African apartheid. But nothing is ever so straightforward.

Free speech and pro-democracy advocates should worry about the way in which this is playing out. It is not a given that a wider student movement is brewing - the summer break is imminent and it is unclear whether the students can sustain the momentum.

The clampdown also shows how easily peaceful protest can be re-construed as disruption, hate speech, and the threat of violence (in a recent op-ed, an anti-protest Columbia University professor framed persistent drumming as a form of violence). Where such precedent is established, more clampdowns will follow - and not just on American campuses. Authoritarians everywhere are taking lessons from the US on how effectively to shut down

critical voices. Start small, capture the narrative, distort and weaponise the opposition's words, then send out law enforcement. This is why the challenges of students at elite US university campuses are relevant beyond the context of Gaza.

The images of mass student arrests are inspiring romanticised paeans to Gen Z, pointing out that a generation that was being written off as ill-informed and apolitical is in fact ready to fight for justice. Rather than indulge in complacency, activists everywhere should focus on what is working, and what is not.

One key success is the local relevance of the protests. Rather than broadly campaign for an Israeli ceasefire or the two-state solution, students are making specific demands of their universities: to divest from companies that are providing weapons to the Israeli army and those that profit from the war. They have also framed their demands in the context of increased transparency.

Protesters are also informed about their First Amendment rights and the legality (or not) of various protest tactics. They are well networked across the country, and supported by legal rights groups. Where protesters have been targeted with charges of antisemitism and disruption, there is an accompanying debate about their interpretation of the law.

While the protesters were right to build on the momentum of anti-fossil fuel campaigning, which has invited wider participation, there is some danger that these protests become all-inclusive: in some universities, there are also demands to cut ties with Israeli institutions or end scientific research that could support the manufacture of weapons that

could be used to perpetrate genocide. At Columbia University, protesters have also made demands about low-income housing in the nearby Harlem neighbourhood and called for the university to review its relationship with the New York Police Department. While this diversity of demands will sustain a culture of campus activism, it risks dilution of the present cause.

The extent to which students are informed also varies greatly. The history of certain slogans and images being used, for example, is poorly understood, and so has resulted in protesters being accused of antisemitism. In a university setting, protest should not just be about opposition, but also education. The growing toxicity of anti-protest stances means there are dwindling opportunities for learning and dialogue.

Over recent days, my social media feeds increasingly feature young voices from Pakistan wondering whether they should launch pro-Palestine protests and not just leave such activism to the "goras". This is the wrong approach. Activism works when it is rooted in a local context and driven by specific demands. Pakistan has a powerful history of student activism, from the protests against Ayub Khan's dictatorship to the more recent Student Solidarity Movement demanding student unions and an end to student harassment.

The recent bill supporting students' unions and Quid-i-Azam University's decision to allow such groups means Pakistan too is at the cusp of a revival of student activism. Let campus protest movements thrive, but let them do so in the spirit of justice, knowledge and positive change. -- Courtesy Dawn

Ahsan Iqbal highlights role of engineering in developed world

NAROWAL (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said that behind the development of the modern world is the hard work of engineers and the solution of most of the problems of all sectors of life, including health, food, and industry is related to the field of engineering.

He expressed the views at the ongoing "Science Mela 2024" at University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Narowal Campus. Students of different departments of the university presented their final year projects for exhibition at the Innovation Center of the University of Engineering and Technology sub-campus Narowal. The projects related to electrical, mechanical, civil, bio-medical engineering and computer engineering.

Students of various universities including Agriculture University Faisalabad, UMT Sialkot Campus, ITU University of Narowal, Veterinary University Narowal Campus participated in the science fair.

Later, Ahsan Iqbal handed over new buses provided to the University of Engineering and Technology Narowal Campus to the administration and also planted a sapling in the university. He also participated in the prize distribution ceremony in the seminar hall of UET Narowal Campus.

Speaking on this occasion, he said that UET Narowal Campus was his dream for which he had worked hard to achieve. "Behind the development of the modern world is the hard work of engineers. The solution of most of the problems of all sectors of life, including health, food, and industry is related to the field of engineering. Today we are living in the era of technology, today's era is the era of artificial intelligence," he added.

He said, "If you want to establish your place in the world of education and research, you need to go through the process of continuous learning. We have established departments like National Center for Satellite Technology."



NAROWAL: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal visiting the projects exhibited by the students in "Science Mela 2024" at UET Sub-Campus Narowal.

CM inaugurates daycare center at Children's Hospital Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said the Punjab government is committed to provide quality healthcare services to people.

Inaugurating a Kids' Day Care Center at Children's Hospital Lahore on Monday, the CM directed the relevant authorities to build a new ICU unit in Children's Hospital, and directed to ensure timely release of funds for its early completion.

The chief minister said that every penny was a trust of the nation, it would be spent transparently on the improvement of healthcare facilities. "We want to build the best hospital for people in every district" she vowed.

The CM said shortage of doctors in remote area hospitals would be catered to. She also reviewed a proposal to build Children's Hospital at the Divisional Headquarters and link them with the Children's Hospital Lahore. She directed the provincial ministers to visit the hospital on daily basis.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif also witnessed signing of an MoU between Islamic Aid UK and University of Child Health Sciences for the establishment of a college block.

Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, VC Dr Masood Sadiq and Chairman Islamic Aid Mahmoodul Hasan signed the MoU. The CM thanked Islamic Aid for their cooperation and support.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif also visited the day care center and reviewed facilities available there. She loved the children and offered them flowers. She directed the day care center staff to take good care of the children.

Earlier, the CM was briefed that the education and research facilities related to children's health will be provided to medical students in the new college block.

Sindh govt launches Bhook Mitao, Benazir women agriculture support programs

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presiding over the first meeting of the Sindh Social Protection Board approved the feasibility studies of the Food Security - Bhook Mitao program and the Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Support program.

These programs are aimed at benefiting the marginalized population and will be launched once the feasibility studies are successfully conducted.

The meeting was attended by the board members, including Minister Health Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Minister Education Syed Sardar Shah, Minister Labour Shahid Thahim, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoi, Secretary Social Protection Rafiq Mustafa, Haris Gazdar, CEO Social Protection Unit Samiullah Shaikh, Sono Khanghrani, Prof Amar Sindhu, Ms Shabnam Baloch, Asama Bloch and others.

Secretary Social Protection dept Rafiq Mustafa and CEO of the Social Protection Unit Samiullah Shaikh briefed the board member about the two programmes: Bhook Mitao program and the Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Support program.

The book "Mitao Food Security" is aimed at establishing a combination of instruments and scientific methods for studying food security. It aims to identify vulnerable groups and propose feasible designs and implementations for addressing food security issues and minimizing vulnerability to hunger in marginalized populations.

During the meeting, the board members discussed the program and approved the feasibility study on the "Bhook Mitao" program. They have allocated a budget of Rs30 million for the feasibility study and other allied works.



LARKANA: Minister for Universities and Board Department Sindh, Muhammad Ali Malkani presides over the high-level meeting with the officials of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Larkana (BISE) held at BISE office in Larkana.

CM KP felicitates newly elected local bodies representatives

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Monday congratulated the newly elected six local bodies representatives in by-elections.

Chief Minister in a statement said that in unofficial and inconclusive results, PTI-backed candidates have won five out of six seats of Tehsil Chairman which is a manifestation of the trust of the people of the province on his party.

"I thank the people of these constituencies for showing full confidence in the supporting PTI-backed candidates", said Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

"I also congratulate the party leadership and workers for the excellent success of the candidates supported by the party in the by-elections".

The chief minister said that in these elections, the nation has given a huge mandate to his party across the country.

He said party's founder can be put in jail but cannot be removed from the hearts of the people, said Ali Amin.

He further said that the public mandate should be recognized in the better interest of the country and nation.

Ali Amin said that they will continue all political, constitutional and legal struggle to achieve their right to provide relief to people of the province.

Home Minister inaugurates 'Day Care Center' for children of policewomen

LAHORE (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar on Monday inaugurated a Day Care Center for the children of policewomen established at the Saudabad Police Headquarters Malir.

DIG East, SSP East, Korangi, Malir and other senior officers were also present.

The Home Minister was briefed by SP Jameshed Quarters Aleena Rajpar about the establishment and objectives of the Day Care Center.

The Minister termed the establishment of the Day Care Center as an extremely commendable initiative by the Sindh Police.

He said that the women associated with police department can leave their children at the Day Care Center and perform their duties with full focus and dedication, free from any worry or concern.

He suggested the establishment of similar centers in Karachi for the care and supervision of the children of women officers.

He further said that arrangements would also be made for the care of the children of ordinary women affected by domestic violence and disputes at the Day Care Center.

MHBA delegation calls on CJ Punjab

MULTAN (APP): A delegation of Multan Highcourt Bar Association (MHBA) called on Chief Justice (CJ) Lahore High Court, Mr Justice Malik Shehbaz Ahmad, said statement issued here Monday.

The delegation led by the president, Sajjad Haider Maitla comprised of the general secretary, Anees Mehdi and senior advocate, Masroor Haider Usman.

The delegation requested the CJ to visit Multan bar at the earliest. They informed the top Highcourt judge about problems the bar was facing in particular with scant facilities within its respective cordial atmosphere. There're problems pertaining to district and tehsil bar associations also brought in notice of CJ, added the statement.

The delegation hailed CJ for the multiple steps were taken to facilitate lawyers and complainants visiting the courts to get the justice. However, the delegation requested further the authority to step up measures to build visitors' confidence in the courts.

Sajjad Haider Maitla asked the CJ to increase judges' strength in Multan bench through securing appointments from Multan bar.

Najmi Alam says: Officers to be transferred if fail to achieve target

KARACHI (APP): Advisor to Sindh CM on Livestock, Fisheries, Human Settlement, Special Development and Social Housing Syed Najmi Alam on Monday chaired a meeting.

All the directors and other officials including the DG Kuchibadi Muhammad Nadeem participated the meeting.

Secretary Kuchibadi gave a briefing to Advisor about the performance of the department. Najmi Alam directed the officers and said that the performance of all officers should be monitored to improve the collection system.

DG Kuchibadi briefed that annual target of collection is Rs 26 crores, out of which even 50% has not been collected yet, only 11 crores have been collected. On which advisor took strict action and gave a deadline of 15 May and said that any officer appointed after the fixed deadline failed to complete the target, he should consider himself transferred.

Marriyum says: EPD seals 170 brick kilns, registers 169 FIRs in 15 days

LAHORE (APP): Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has sealed 170 brick kilns, besides registering 169 FIRs during a province-wide campaign against the scourge of pollution during last 15 days.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb disclosed this in a statement issued on Monday. While giving details, the senior minister reported that during this period, the department inspected a total of 4488 brick kilns in various districts, and 170 kilns were sealed for violations of environmental laws, 705 brick kilns were issued notices and fines totaling Rs.20.1 million were imposed on the owners of brick kilns found guilty of environmental law violations. Similarly, police were also approached for the registration of FIRs against 169 kiln.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health Khawaja Salman Rafique addressing the participants of PMA MedCon & Health Expo-2024 at local hotel.

Mayor says: 60 buses to be shifted on diesel under PPP-mode to provide travel facilities

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that 60 buses of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation will be shifted on diesel under public-private partnership (PPP-mode) to provide travel facilities to the citizens.

These buses were available with us and it was only a matter of intentions, due to CNG crisis, one of the buses has been shifted on diesel as a test case in Lahore and now after the change of fuel system and the bus has been brought to Karachi, he told this to media here on Monday.

He said that covering a distance of 1200 kilometers, bus fares and routes have not been decided yet, details will be informed about soon. A public-private partnership mechanism should be made to bring these buses on the roads.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that the Sindh government is already in the process of improving the transport facilities for the citizens of Karachi. Red and Pink buses have arrived in the city, now the KMC has decided to make the available buses functional while fulfilling its responsibilities in this regard.



LAHORE: Chief Traffic Officer Amara Athar hold a banner along with students during Traffic Awareness walk (Use Helmet) at Faisal Chowk in the Provincial Capital.

Police committed to continue best services for masses: RPO

MULTAN (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Capt (ret) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry on Monday said that the police would continue best services for the masses and more improvement was being made in service delivery for public facilitation.

In a ceremony of awarding cash prizes and commendatory certificates to traffic police officials over impressive performance here, the regional police officer said that the basic purpose of the police department was to serve the people and to protect lives and properties of the masses adding that all possible efforts were being made for this purpose.

He said that the department was striving hard to ensure maximum relief to masses through improving service delivery.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman offering Fateha during his visit to residence of MNA Saira Afzal Tarar and extended condolences to her on the death of her father.

Provincial Outbreak Committee to provide immediate response during any outbreak

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The first meeting of the Provincial Outbreak Committee, chaired by Minister of Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah, was held on Monday at Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir, Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Khan Mahsood, Special Secretary Polio Program Abdul Basit, along with Additional DG Administration Dr. Siraj, Director EPI Dr. Arif, Director Public Health Dr. Irshad Roghani, Director IMU Dr Ijaz and all other relevant quarters in person.

All DHOs and MSs attended the meeting online. It was reported to the minister that district outbreak committees have been formed in all districts of the province. Initial meetings have been conducted in the relevant districts to activate these committees. The minister stated that the purpose of the Provincial Outbreak Committee is to provide an immediate response during any outbreak. He further explained that this initiative will improve the provision of routine health services, and the performance of health department officials will be presented to this committee.



FAISALABAD: A lady health worker administering polio drops to a child during 7-days anti polio campaign in the city.

Pak-Saudi economic ties enter a new era with trade boosting steps ahead: PM

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the economic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had entered a new era as both countries were set to take concrete measures to boost the volume of bilateral trade.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Saudi Minister of Commerce Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi on the sidelines of the Special Economic Forum here, said the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was playing an active role in promoting and facilitating

the foreign investment in the country.

The Saudi minister told the prime minister that on the directives of Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom was prioritising trade and investment in Pakistan.

A delegation of Saudi businessmen, traders and investors would soon visit Pakistan, he added.

The Saudi minister said that the targets were being set to take the bilateral ties to a new height within one or one-and-half years.

Prime Minister

Shehbaz said that the Pakistani nationals had played a significant role in the progress and prosperity of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Minister Al-Qasabi stressed the need to further promote the sentiments about the Pak-Saudi ties among the youth and new generation.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, Information and Broadcasting Minister Attallah Tarar, Petroleum Minister Dr Musaddik Malik and Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi also attended the meeting.



RIYADH: Saudi Minister for Commerce H.E. Majid Al Kasabi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Digital transformation Civil society, private sector & academia's collaboration with govt vital: Shaza Fatima

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima on Monday said that collaborations among the government, civil society, private sector and educational institution is vital for achieving digital transformation in the country.

She expressed these views in her special remarks at the Country Digital Ecosystem Diagnostic Report: Validation Workshop dialogue hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to facilitate knowledge exchange among key stakeholders, driving

sustainable development in Pakistan's digital landscape.

The Country Digital Ecosystem Diagnostic Report: Validation Workshop is a crucial milestone in the ongoing efforts to assess and enhance Pakistan's digital landscape. The diagnostic report provides key insights into Pakistan's digital ecosystem, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats across different pillars.

Shaza Fatima emphasized the importance of diagnostic reports and research surveys for the government in creating well-informed policies, strategies, and their implementation.

She stressed that short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans must be based on available data to ensure effective decision-making in the digital transformation journey.

She acknowledged the challenges and opportunities Pakistan faces in this transformation. She also emphasized Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of national and digital transformation across economic, governance, and societal verticals. Khawaja also stressed the need for private sector leadership in this transformation, with the government facilitating through policies and regulations.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

Cheema for tapping Pakistan, Kazakhstan trade potential

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema on Monday highlighted the steady increase in bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, underscoring the need for further measures to fully tap the existing trade potential between two nations.

He was talking to Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, who paid a courtesy call on him, according to an Economic Affairs Division (EAD) news release.

The minister emphasized the longstanding bonds of brotherhood, cultural affinity and mutual respect shared between the two countries since the establishment of bilateral relations in February 1992.

He stressed the importance of reciprocal visits by businessmen and

investors to boost bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

Minister Cheema He acknowledged the successful hosting of the 12th Session of Pakistan-Kazakhstan Joint Intergovernmental Commission (JIC), saying it would further fortify shared vision of growth and prosperity.

Appreciating the signing of memorandums of understanding on tourism and culture during the 12th Session of JIC, he stated that the people of Pakistan had a deep-rooted appreciation for the rich and diverse culture of Kazakhstan.

"We have seen a significant increase in the interest from Pakistani tourists to Kazakhstan in recent years. This surge in tourism reflects the genuine interest and fascination that our citizens have for Kazakh culture, heritage.

Efforts afoot to uplift livestock sector by improving vaccination

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Monday reiterated the firm resolve of the government to uplift livestock sector by strengthening vaccination system for eliminating different diseases of the animals from the country.

He said that the government was also take appropriate measures and provide technical supports to livestock farmers for the uplift and development of the local livestock sector to achieve sustainable agricultural growth by enhancing farm productivity. Addressing a workshop held here to control and eradicate PPR, the minister said that the government has launched a national program to

eradicate this disease with the support of provincial governments, adding that provided free vaccination of sheep and goats under this program.

He said that due to the integrated strategy of the national and provincial governments, the rate of PPR disease has decreased significantly, adding that the federal government has provided 31.35 million doses of PPR vaccines to the provinces during the year from 2022-24.

The Veterinary Research Institute Lahore had manufactures about 20 million doses of vaccines annually for the Punjab province, he said adding vaccination teams of provincial livestock department are engaged in village-to-village vaccination campaign.

Jazz closes Rs. 15b Sukuk to advance its 4G for all digital agenda

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's leading digital operator, Jazz, announces the successful closure of its Rs 15 billion Sukuk, marking the first ever and largest short term unsecured Sukuk by a telecom operator in Pakistan.

This will pave way to an entirely new funding avenue for Jazz to fund its 4G for all digital ambitions said a news release.

With a 30-year track record in Pakistan and investments exceeding USD 10.6 billion, Jazz represents one of the country's largest investors,

leading the cellular industry with a 45% revenue market share, while serving over 71.5 million subscribers.

With the successful closure of this initiative, Jazz management expresses gratitude to its valued investors for their confidence in the digital operator and its capacity to generate value for investors, customers, and society at large.

This Sukuk issue will also contribute to the increased utilization of Shariah-compliant financial instruments in Pakistan's capital markets.

Rupee sheds 01 paise against US dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday lost 01 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.39 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.38.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.25 and Rs 279.85 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 49 paise and closed at Rs 298.38 against the last-day closing of Rs 298.87, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged at Rs 1.78, whereas an increase of 31 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 348.79 compared to the last closing of Rs 348.48.

The Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal witnessed no change and closed at Rs 75.79 and Rs 74.22 respectively.

International workshop on "Gemstones" held at UET

PESHAWAR (APP): A One-day international workshop on "Gemstone identification, certification, and cutting according to international market" was organized by Gem and Jewellery Centre of Excellence (GJoC), UET Peshawar here on Monday in collaboration with the National Productivity Organization, and the All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA).

The aim of the workshop was to provide a platform to impart knowledge about Gemstone Identification, Certification, and Cutting according to the International Market.

The chief guest of the workshop was Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali, Vice Chancellor, UET Peshawar, while the keynote speakers were Mr. Thanong Leelawatanasuk, Deputy Director (Technical) Gem and Jewellery Institute of Thailand (GIT), Dr. Surin Intayot, Assistant Professor GIT, and Ms. Supparat Promwongnan, Gemmologist.

Punjab govt in touch with real representatives of farmers: Azma Bukhari

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said on Monday that the Punjab government was in touch with the real representatives of farmers.

In a statement issued here, she said that no representative of farmers or their organizations had been arrested since the province. She said, "The Punjab government is

protecting the interests of farmers and will do the same in future as well."

The minister said there were three to four organizations of farmers in the country, adding that some elements in the disguise of farmers just wanted to achieve their political interests. Azma said that there were some seasonal farmers, who had actually contested.



KARACHI: Scrap dealers protesting for their demands outside Karachi Press Club in the Provincial Capital.

BankIslami achieves remarkable financial results of Rs 6.3 billion

KARACHI (APP): Maintaining its growth momentum, BankIslami delivered an impressive return for its shareholders, with a remarkable 99% surge in its profit before tax for the first quarter of 2024.

The Bank's profit before tax reached Rs. 6.3 billion, with a post-tax profit of Rs. 3.2 billion, representing a growth of 79.2%. Despite adverse market conditions, the Bank remains committed to financial excellence.

Prominently, it demonstrated magnificent cost efficiency, as evidenced by the reduced cost-to-income ratio of 43.1% during the period, compared to 47.9% in the same period last year. BankIslami

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where three ships namely, MSC Beira IV, Gold Trader and Milaha Qatar carrying Container, Chemicals and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Engro Terminal and Gasport Terminal respectively Sunday.

Meanwhile three more ships, MSC Antigua, Majestic Noor and FSM scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice and LPG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

A total of eight ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them an edible oil carrier 'Thanasis' left the Port on today morning.

Meanwhile two more ships, MSC beira-IV and Libertangoare expected to sail on today.

Mudassar Tipu says: Trade bodies of Pakistan, Iran should further strengthen bilateral trade relations

LAHORE: Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, Muhammad Mudassar Tipu discussed with business community the challenges and opportunities for enhancing bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran during his visit to the FPCCI (Federation Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry) Regional Office here Monday. Tipu said the trade bodies of Pakistan and Iran should further

strengthen bilateral trade relations. "We are working on institutionalizing barter trade with both countries. Iran is trading with other neighboring countries; trade with Pakistan is also possible, for which we have to make positive efforts. Iran's big investors also want to invest in Pakistan." During the interactive session with the business community, the envoy also shared the highlights of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's recent visit to Pakistan and enlightened the Pakistani

business community on new trade opportunities. He emphasized that this visit signifies the strong bonds between the two nations and the alignment of their authorities in various aspects.

On this occasion, FPCCI Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Aijaz said that Pakistan and Iran have great scope for promoting bilateral trade. Regional trade is of great importance, and it needs increased time.

He said that despite Pakistan and Iran's strong ties of friendship and brotherhood, bilateral trade is not up to the potential. The business community is facing transportation, tariff and non-tariff barriers, banking channels, and currency problems, he mentioned. Zaki Ijaz said that the purpose of the meeting of the Pakistani business community with Pakistan's ambassador to Iran was to promote bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran and pave the way for new opportunities.



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Pakistan calls on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Ahad Khan Cheema.

Continuing tight monetary stance SBP maintains policy rate at 22%

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan, Monday, persistently kept policy rate unchanged at 22 percent while stressing on continuation of the current monetary policy stance to bring inflation down to the target range.

The central bank, in a statement issued here following the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), noted that the macroeconomic stabilization measures though contributing to considerable improvement in both inflation and external position amid moderate economic recovery, level of inflation was still high despite of descending trends.

The committee reviewed Inflation outlook and found it in line with the MPC's expectations as inflation has continued to moderate noticeably in H2-FY24. Headline inflation in March declined to 20.7% from 23.1% in February while core inflation fell significantly to 15.7%

from 18.1% in February. Besides the coordinated tight monetary and fiscal policy response, other factors that have led to this favorable outcome include lower global commodity prices, improved food supplies and high base effect.

The Committee viewed that inflation would continue to remain on downward trajectory, however, the inflation outlook was susceptible to risks emanating from the recent global oil price volatility along with bottoming out of other commodity prices; potential inflationary impact of resolution of circular debt in the energy sector; and tax rate-driven fiscal consolidation going forward. Cognizant of these risks, the Committee assessed that it is prudent to continue with the current monetary policy stance at this stage, with significant positive real interest rates to bring inflation down to the target.



HUB: Farmers are busy in their works to earn their livelihood for support their families, at a wheat field during a hot day of summer season, in Hub.

CDNS attains Rs 1375b targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 1375 billion in fresh bonds and achieved 80 percent of annual target in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to April 25.

The National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1742 billion for the year 2023-24, in which it is encouraging that 80 percent of the target has been achieved, and it is hoped that National Savings will surpass its annual target this FY 2023-24, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Monday.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, he said. He said this was an Rs 200 billion additional

annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

"The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said.

Given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced.

"At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users.



LAHORE: FPCCI Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Aijaz presenting shield to Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, Muhammad Mudassar Tipu during his visit to FPCCI office.

US, Britain urge Hamas to accept Israeli truce proposal

Blinken says Israel must still do more to boost humanitarian aid to Gaza

Monitoring Desk
RIYADH: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday urged Hamas to swiftly accept an Israeli proposal for a truce in the Gaza war and the release of Israeli hostages held by the Palestinian militant group.

Hamas negotiators were expected to meet Qatari and Egyptian mediators in Cairo on Monday to deliver a response to the phased truce proposal which Israel presented at the weekend. "Hamas has before it a proposal that is extraordinarily, extraordinarily generous on the part of Israel," Blinken said at a

meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Saudi capital Riyadh. "The only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire is Hamas. They have to decide and they have to decide quickly," he said. "I'm hopeful that they will make the right decision." A source briefed on the talks said Israel's proposal entailed a deal for the release of fewer than 40 of the roughly 130 hostages believed to be still held in Gaza in exchange for freeing Palestinians jailed in Israel.

A second phase of a truce would consist of a "period of sustained calm" - Israel's compromise response to a Hamas demand for a permanent ceasefire. A total of 253 hostages were seized in a Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which about 1,200 Israelis were also killed, according to Israeli counts. Israel retaliated by imposing a total siege on Gaza and mounting an air and ground assault that has killed about 34,500 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities. Palestinians are suffering from severe shortages of food, fuel and medicine in a humanitarian cri-



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken attends the U.S.-Arab Quint Meeting with representatives from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Palestinian Authority, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg arrive for a press conference, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine.

India is not an autocracy, insists PM Modi

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi denied on Monday that his country was sliding towards autocracy, following accusations that his government orchestrated criminal probes to weaken rivals ahead of an ongoing general election.

Modi, 73, remains resoundingly popular after a decade in office, and he is widely expected to win a third term when the six-week-long national polls conclude in June. His prospects have been further bolstered by several criminal investigations into opponents, including a tax probe that in February froze the bank accounts of Congress, India's largest opposition party. But Modi said the suggestion India was becoming "an electoral autocracy" under his rule was a fiction spread by his disgruntled rivals.

Scotland's Humza Yousaf resigns as country's leader

Monitoring Desk
EDINBURGH: Scottish First Minister Humza Yousaf resigned on Monday, further opening the door to the UK opposition Labour Party to regain ground in its former Scottish heartlands in a national election expected later this year.

The 39-year-old politician said he would also stand down as leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) but would stay on until his successor was found. Yousaf quit as head of the SNP after a week of chaos triggered by his scrapping of a coalition agreement with Scotland's Greens. He then failed to secure enough support to survive votes of no confidence against him expected later this week.

China set to launch high-stakes mission to moon's 'hidden' side

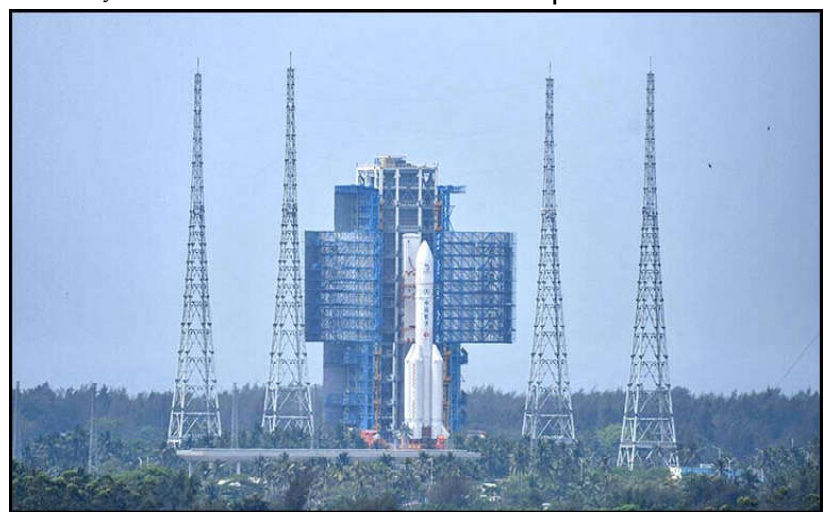
Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China will send a robotic spacecraft in the coming days on a round trip to the moon's far side in the first of three technically demanding missions that will pave the way for an inaugural Chinese crewed landing and a base on the lunar south pole. Since the first Chang'e mission in 2007, named after the mythical Chinese moon goddess, China has made leaps forward in its lunar exploration, narrowing the technological chasm with the United States and Russia.

In 2020, China brought back samples from the moon's near side in the first sample retrieval in more than four decades, confirming for the first time that it could safely return an uncrewed spacecraft to Earth from the lunar surface. This week, China is expected to launch Chang'e-6 using the backup spacecraft from the 2020 mission and collect soil and rocks from the side of the moon that permanently faces away from Earth.

Indian lawmaker allied with Modi's BJP faces sexual harassment probe

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: India's southern state of Karnataka will investigate a lawmaker whose party is a key ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on suspicion of sexual harassment, the state's chief minister has said.

The scion of a prominent political family, the lawmaker, Prajwal Revanna, 33, is the grandson of former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, the nephew of a former chief minister of the state and the son of another former Karnataka minister. The accusations surfaced last week as half of the state voted in India's seven-phase general elections, in which Revanna was seeking a second term for his Janata Dal (Secular) party. "The government has decided to form a special investigation team in connection with Prajwal Revanna's obscene video case," Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, whose Congress party is a BJP rival.



The Chang'e 6 lunar probe and the Long March-5 Y8 carrier rocket combination sit atop the launch pad at the Wenchang Space Launch Site in Hainan province, China.

Israel kills at least 30 Palestinians in Rafah, new Gaza ceasefire talks expected in Cairo

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Israeli airstrikes on three houses in the southern Gaza city of Rafah killed at least 25 Palestinians and wounded many others, medics said on Monday, as leaders of Hamas arrived in Cairo for a new round of talks with Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

In Gaza City, in the north of the Gaza Strip, Israeli warplanes struck two houses, killing at least four people and wounding several people, health officials said. The strike on the other house killed two brothers, they added. The strikes on Rafah, where more than one million people have sought refuge from months of Israeli bombardment, took place hours before Egypt was expected to host leaders of the Islamist group Hamas to discuss prospects for a ceasefire agreement with Israel.

At least 40 people die in western Kenya after a dam collapses following heavy rains

Monitoring Desk
NAIROBI: A dam collapsed in western Kenya early Monday, killing at least 40 people after a wall of water swept through houses and cut off a major road, police said.

The Old Kijabe Dam, located in the Mai Mahiu area of the Great Rift Valley region that is prone to flash floods, collapsed and water spilled downstream, carrying with it mud, rocks and uprooted trees, police official Stephen Kirui told The Associated Press. Vehicles were entangled in the debris on one of Kenya's busiest highways and paramedics treated the injured as waters submerged large areas.

Pro-Khalistan slogans raised as Canadian PM attends annual Khalsa Day event

Monitoring Desk
TORONTO: Pro-Khalistan slogans were raised in the presence of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau when he attended the Khalsa Day Celebrations in Toronto.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, and Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow also attended the event known as Vaisaki - the day which marks the celebration of the Sikh New Year. As the Canadian premier walked up to the stage for his speech on the occasion, people attending the

Ireland looking to send asylum seekers back to UK

Monitoring Desk
DUBLIN: Ireland is looking to amend the law to allow the return of asylum seekers to the United Kingdom, broadcaster RTE said on Sunday after an influx over the border with Northern Ireland.

Dublin's Minister of Justice Helen McEntee, who visits London on Monday, told a parliamentary committee this week that she estimates 80 percent of those applying for asylum in the republic came over the land border with Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told Sky News it was evidence that London's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda is acting as a deterrent. "What it shows, I think, is that the deterrent is... already having an im-

NATO chief, on unannounced Kyiv visit, says arms flows to Ukraine will increase

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: NATO boss Jens Stoltenberg told Ukrainians on Monday that his alliance's members had failed to live up to their promises of military aid in recent months, but said the flow of arms and ammunition would now increase.

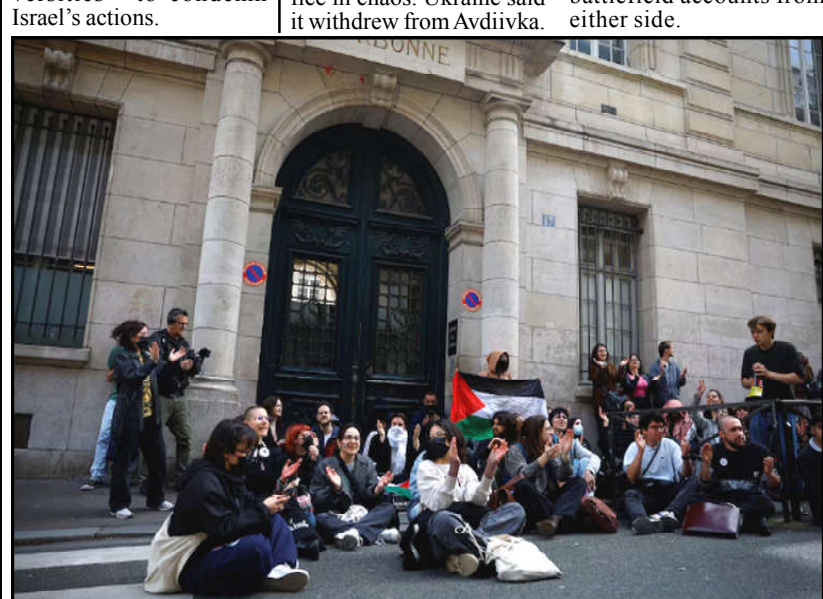
In an unannounced visit to Ukraine, the secretary general of the transatlantic military alliance held talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and was due to address Ukraine's parliament, the Rada. His visit - the third since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 - comes at a difficult time on the battlefield for Ukraine. After a failed Ukrainian counter-offensive last year, Russian forces have gained the initiative - at least in part due to a dearth of arms and ammunition from Kyiv's Western partners.

Gaza protesters disrupt Paris's Sorbonne university

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: Protesters angry over the Gaza war took to Paris's Sorbonne University on Monday, chanting 'Free Palestine' at the university's gates while some students set up tents in the courtyard.

Days after similar protests at Paris's Sciences Po elite school, the gathering at the Sorbonne was the latest sign that demonstrations on U.S. campuses were spilling over to Europe as the devastating war is in its seventh month. The protests, which lead the university to close the building for the day, were peaceful as students urged the institution - one of the world's oldest universities - to condemn Israel's actions.

Russia's defence ministry said its troops had taken the village of Avdiivka, northwest of Donetsk region, gaining better positions in the Kharkiv region and repelling a number of Ukrainian attacks, Russia's defence ministry said. Russia controls about 18% of Ukraine - in the east and south - and has been gaining ground since the failure of Kyiv's 2023 counter-offensive to make any serious inroads against well dug-in Russian troops. President Vladimir Putin in February ordered Russian troops to push further into Ukraine after the fall of the town of Avdiivka where he said Ukrainian troops had been forced to flee in chaos. Ukraine said it withdrew from Avdiivka.



Students block the entrance of the Sorbonne University in support of Palestinians in Gaza, during the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Paris, France.

World Central Kitchen to resume Gaza aid

Monitoring Desk
NICHOSIA: World Central Kitchen (WCK) said it would resume operations in the Gaza Strip on Monday, a month after seven workers of the US-based charity were killed in an Israeli air strike.

Israel concerned over possible ICC arrest warrants related to Gaza war

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Israel is voicing concern that the International Criminal Court could be preparing to issue arrest warrants for government officials on charges related to the conduct of its war against Hamas.

The ICC - which can charge individuals with war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide - is investigating Hamas' Oct. 7 cross-border attack and Israel's devastating military assault on Hamas-ruled Gaza, now in its seventh month. In response to Israeli media reports that the ICC might soon issue arrest warrants for senior Israeli government and military officials, Foreign Minister Israel Katz on Sunday warned Israeli embassies to bolster their security because of the risk of a "wave of severe antisemitism". "We expect the court

(ICC) to refrain from issuing arrest warrants against senior Israeli political and security officials," Katz said. "We will not bow our heads or be deterred and will continue to fight." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday that any ICC decisions would not affect Israel's actions but would set a dangerous precedent. Israeli officials are worried that the court could issue arrest warrants against Netanyahu and other top officials for alleged violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza, Israeli media have reported.

They said the ICC is also considering arrest warrants for leaders from Hamas. The ICC, based in The Hague, and Hamas, Gaza's ruling group, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

President Asif Zardari says Promoting AJK tourism vital for socio-economic uplift, generating economic activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday said that strengthening the tourism sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was significant to ensure the socio-economic uplift and generate economic activities in the area.

He, in a meeting with the AJK Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq, who called on him at the Awwan-e-Sadr, assured that Pakistan would provide all possible support and assistance to facilitate investment in the diverse areas of AJK's economy, especially the tourism sector, according to a President House press release.

He said that AJK was blessed with immense potential for tourism and a beautiful landscape, which needed to be fully developed to attract tourists.

The two discussed the overall situation of AJK as well as the issues related to AJK's development.

President Zardari remarked that the AJK youth needed to be equipped with the latest skills and education to help them find gainful employment, besides contributing to AJK's development.

He said that Pakistan could assist the government of AJK in benefiting from the carbon credit markets.

During the meeting, the president assured of his support to the AJK prime minister and his government.

The AJK prime minister requested the president to visit AJK and address the AJK Legislative Assembly.

President Zardari also expressed grief over the loss of precious human lives



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Anwar-ul-Haq called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Awwan-e-Sadr.

PM meets Bill Gates; urges sustained efforts by partners for polio-free Pakistan

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday met the founder and co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, wherein he called for a sustained effort by all the partners to reach the ultimate goal of polio-free Pakistan.

In the meeting held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Special Meeting here, the prime minister highlighted that Pakistan was working tirelessly to eradicate polio from the country, a PM Office press release said.

Earlier, both leaders had featured in a WEF's high-level panel discussion titled "Redefining the Global Health Agenda." The prime minister thanked Bill Gates for sending him a warm congratulatory letter upon his re-election.

Bill Gates recalled the immunization and polio vaccine program in Punjab province under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif as chief minister and emphasized replicating the same practice across the country to make the immunization program a success.

While fondly recalling their interactions during his previous tenure, the prime minister reaffirmed his commitment to continue working closely with Bill Gates to ensure a stronger partnership between Pakistan and the Gates Foundation.

He thanked the BMGF for its longstanding support for polio eradication in Pakistan.

Bill Gates acknowledged Pakistan's efforts and said polio eradication was

vital to protect future generations from this crippling disease.

In addition to polio, Prime Minister Shehbaz and Bill Gates also discussed progress on ongoing activities between Pakistan and the Foundation in the areas of immunization, nutrition, and financial inclusion.

The prime minister said that the Gates Foundation was a trusted partner in Pakistan's socio-economic development and sought collaboration in other areas including IT, STEM education and disaster management.

Recalling Bill Gates' visit to Pakistan in February 2022, the prime minister extended an invitation to him to visit Pakistan again at a time of his convenience.

Senate adopts SC's 4 recommendations about Money Bill

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate on Monday adopted four recommendations of the Special Committee related to Money Bill, the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Convener Special Committee Farooq Hamid Naek presented the committee's report in the House. After through discussion on the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, the committee unanimously recommended amendments in clause 2, in sub-clause (e), after the word "law", the words "or a mixed question of law and fact", shall be inserted; in clause 3, in sub-clause (e), after the word "law", the words "or mixed question of law and fact, shall be inserted. In Clause 4, (a) in sub-clause (f), in section 132, (i) in sub-section (1), for the second proviso, the following shall be substituted, namely: "provided further that where an appeal is not decided within the aforesaid period, the Appellate Tribunal may, for reasons to be recorded

in writing, condone the delay on an aggregate period of thirty days"; in sub-section (2), in clause (b), for the word "should", the word "if" shall be substituted; and (iii) in sub-section (3), for the words "to the aforesaid hearing schedule by the taxpayer and the commissioner" the expression "by the taxpayer and the Commissioner, to the hearing schedule as prescribed," shall be substituted.

The committee also recommended amendments in sub-clause (g), in section 133, (i) in sub-section (2), after the word "law", the words "or a mixed question of law and fact", shall be inserted;

(ii) in sub-section (3), after the word "law" the words "or a mixed question of law and fact", shall be inserted;

(iii) in sub-section (4), for the expression "a Special Bench, constituted", the expression "Special Bench or the Special Benches, as the case may be, to be constituted by the Chief Justice.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, Commander of Turkish Land Forces called on Minister for Defence & Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

Aleem announces significant developments for motorway expansion

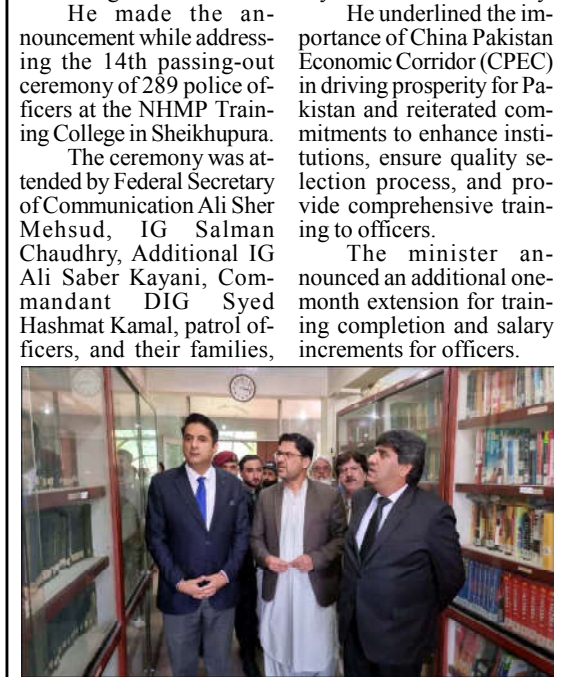
ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday announced the significant developments for the motorway expansion from Mansehra to Gilgit, Babu Sar top and Skardu region.

He made the announcement while addressing the 14th passing-out ceremony of 289 police officers at the NHMP Training College in Sheikhpura.

The ceremony was attended by Federal Secretary of Communication Ali Sher Mehsud, IG Salman Chaudhry, Additional IG Ali Saber Kayani, Commandant DIG Syed Hashmat Kamal, patrol officers, and their families.

He underlined the importance of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in driving prosperity for Pakistan and reiterated commitments to enhance institutions, ensure quality selection process, and provide comprehensive training to officers.

The minister announced an additional one-month extension for training completion and salary increments for officers.



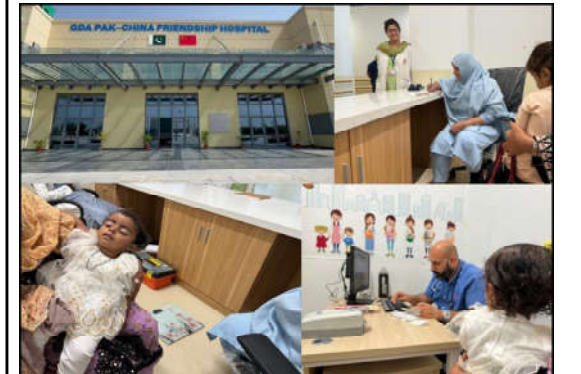
QUETTA: Justice of the Balochistan High Court (BHC), Shaukat Ali Rakhshani being briefed by Hamza Shafiq Commissioner and Administrator Quetta during his visit to Sandeman Library of Metropolitan Corporation.

NA passes tax laws amendment bill 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Monday passed the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 which would give the legislative effect to the taxation proposals of the federal government. The bill was taken by the House as the supplementary agenda and Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar moved the bill. The House passed the amended bill which aims to give legislative effect to the taxation proposals of the federal government to liquidate a significant number of appeals pending before Commissioner IR (Appeals) and Appellate Tribunals as ATIR is the last fact-finding authority in the appellate hierarchy provided in fiscal statutes.

GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital starts services under Indus Health Network

Independent Report Khilji. The initiative is a revolutionary one for the province in health sector by the provincial government under GDA. Needless to mention here is that the newly built 100-bedded GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital is a state of



Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti and Chief Secretary Shaqeeb Qadir Khan under supervision of Director General GDA, Dawood Khan



RIYADH: Founder and Co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Bill Gates calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of a special meeting of the World Economic Forum.

Nazeer urges MNAs from Balochistan to educate masses against gas theft

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar, urged the members of the National Assembly elected from Balochistan on Monday to educate the masses against gas theft in the province.

In response to a calling attention notice regarding over billing and extra service charges in Balochistan, particularly in Quetta by the Sui Gas Company, he expressed concern over the high incidence of gas theft and meter

tampering in the province. The Minister said that the government has launched campaigns against gas theft from time to time in the province. He cited a report indicating that the company is facing a 55 percent loss in the Quetta region due to gas theft.

Azam Nazeer Tarar said that natural resources are assets of the country and should be utilized with care, urging concerted efforts to combat gas theft and promote responsible use of resources.



QUETTA: Provincial Advisor for Environmental Naseemur Rehman, MPA Maulana Hidayatur Rehman, Umar Khan Achakzai, Director Khana Farhang Iran Dr. Abul Hassan and other addressing the event organized in collaboration with Pak-Iran Youth Forum and Khana Farhang Iran

Draft of Procurement policy of MSD prepared

Independent Report Khan during his visit there. The Secretary Health inaugurated the work of repair and renovation of MSD.

He also launched the digitalized supply chain management dashboard in MSD.

The initiative is aimed at bringing transparency in supply of the medicines.

Also present on the occasion were Deputy Secretary Riayat Ali, Additional Director General Health, Dr Fahim Khan and other concerned high ups.

This and similar other details were shared by the MSD high ups with the Secretary Health, Abdullah

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has summoned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Tuesday to clarify discrepancies found in his declaration of assets and liabilities submitted for the general elections of 2024. The ECP has instructed CM Gandapur to personally appear on Tuesday.

Commander Turkish Land Forces calls on Defence Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Commander of Turkish Land Forces, General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu Monday called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, whereas the Defence Minister welcomed the dignitary and expressed satisfaction over common understanding on regional and global geopolitical situation.

According to the news release, both sides acknowledged the strong relationship between their Armed Forces and committed to further expand defence collaboration.

The defence minister also appreciated Turkiye's strong support for Pakistan on multiple foras.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister Mir Ali Madad Jattak, MPA Mir Liaquat Lehri and Shakeel Durrani meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti

PM, Malaysian counterpart reaffirm to broaden bilateral cooperation in diverse fields

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Monday recalled the historical ties between Pakistan and Malaysia, especially in the fields of education, science & technology and trade, and undertook to further enhance the cooperation in the future.

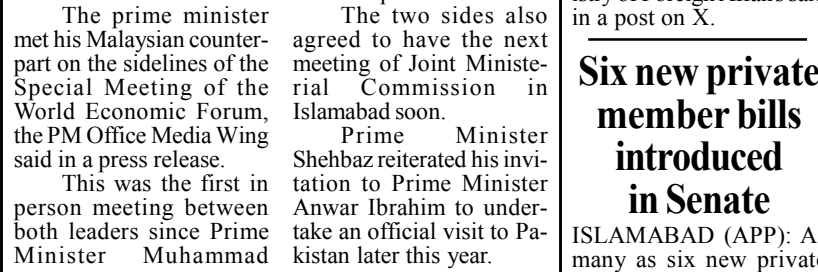
The prime minister invited a trade and business delegation from Malaysia to Pakistan to discuss enhancing trade and investment relations between the two countries.

The two sides also agreed to have the next meeting of Joint Ministerial Commission in Islamabad soon.

Prime Minister Shehbaz reiterated his invitation to Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to undertake an official visit to Pakistan later this year.

Shehbaz Sharif was re-elected in March. The two leaders have, however, spoken twice on telephone, i.e. on March 4 when Prime Minister Shehbaz took office as well as on April 10, this year on Eid ul Fitr.

Following up on their warm conversations on telephone, the prime minister appreciated the leadership of Malaysian premier and also commended his knowledge of art and literature – particularly about the National Poet of Pakistan Allama Iqbal.



QUETTA: Opposition leader in Balochistan Assembly Mir Younis Lehri and Rozi Khan Kakar meeting with Provincial Minister for Irrigation Mir Sadiq Umrani

Jam Kamal launches anti-polio drive in Hub

QUETTA (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal along with Deputy Commissioner Hub Ruhana Gul Kakar on Monday inaugurated an anti-polio campaign in his constituencies in Hub District.

Deputy Commissioner briefed the Minister regarding the preparation of the drive that the authorities were paying special attention to polio after the reports of polio virus being positive after the sampling of the sewage drains of the district Hub.

She said in the briefing that this year, a special polio campaign has been started in Balochistan after polio cases were reported in Dera Bugti and Chaman.

WHO officer Dr. Nazir and the administrative officer said in the briefing that during the last polio campaign, the majority of rejected children have been recovered.

They said that 78 area in-charges, 25 monitors, 23 fax centers, 18 transit points have been established and 326 teams were formed to administer polio vaccine in Hub district. The special anti-polio campaign will continue from April 29 to May 3. Around 360 teams have been formed across the district to vaccinate children, who will go door to door to administer polio drops to children in Hub Town and its suburbs, Tehsil Drijji, Sonmiani Winder and Gadani, they said. The district officer said that our entire team, the district administration and health workers were working together.

He launched the anti-polio drive in Hub District.

Deputy Commissioner stressed the need to make anti-polio campaign successful.

In this regard, Deputy Commissioner urged the parents to cooperate with the polio teams and ensure immunization of their children against polio.

Shahid Jamil Kakar said we have to provide safe future to our children.

Anes Tariq appointed as DG Industries

Independent Report QUETTA: The Balochistan Secretariat Service (BSS) officer, Anes Tariq Gorgaj, serving as the Additional Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs has been transferred and posted as the Director General Industries, Balochistan.

This was announced in an official notification issued here by the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD) on Monday.

According to the notification, Habibullah Khan, serving as Deputy Commissioner Noshki has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD while in his place, Deputy Secretary, Energy Department, Amjad Soomro has been transferred and posted as the Deputy Commissioner Noshki.

SIC head warns of resignation from assemblies if Imran does not get justice

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza warned the government that they will tender their resignations from the assemblies if former premier Imran Khan does not get justice.

In a tweet on Monday, "If the founder of PTI [Imran Khan] does not get justice, we will not sit in the assemblies." In the tweet, Hamid Raza suggested to the PTI leadership that they need to consider resigning from the assemblies and coming to the roads [for protest].

SIC head Sahibzada Hamid Raza MNA also said that he will be the first person to resign from the National Assembly for PTI founder Imran Khan. He

said the PTI leadership should give a time frame of three weeks to eight weeks to the government for their demands.

On the other hand, the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan announced tabling a resolution against the fake police cases on PTI leadership.

Talking to media outside the session court in Islamabad on Monday, Omar Ayub said an FIR was filed against him and his colleagues because they demonstrated for prisoner number 804 [Imran Khan].

He said they used their constitutional and legal right of a peaceful protest rally in the presence of Islamabad police, the next day, a fake case under various provisions was registered against them.