

Independent

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Ph: 2841470/2841473 Vol: XIX No. 294, Shawwal 06, 1445 AH Monday April 15, 2024, Pages 04, Price Rs.15



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing a gathering on the occasion of the 45th death anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

CM pledges to fight war of State against terrorism with political responsibility and under joint course of action

Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairs high level meeting on law & order; strongly condemns Noshki incident; decides to revisit security plan for curbing such incidents in future

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has reiterated his government's resolve to fight the war of State against terrorism with political responsibility and under joint course of action. He asserted that the war against terrorism is not mere of the security forces, rather it is the war

of State against peace enemies. He stressed that this war has to be fought by the politicians, civil armed forces, judiciary and media. He said that we would fight the war against terrorism with political responsibility and joint course of action. The Chief Minister was chairing high level meeting on law and order

situation in the province here on Sunday morning. The Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Chief Secretary, Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem besides senior civil and military officials were in attendance. The Commissioner Rakhshan Division and Deputy Inspector General of Police briefed the meet-

ing about Noshki tragic incident. While the meeting strongly condemned the Noshki incident, it decided to review and revisit the security plan in backdrop of the gory incident. The Chief Minister on the occasion directed to ensure payment of financial compensation to the bereaved families of Noshki martyrs within week time.

Bilawal calls for 'Charter of Reconciliation' among all political parties

PPP chief warns of dictatorship if politicians do not focus on national reconciliation



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (INP): PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that all politicians and political parties should work on a 'Charter of National Reconciliation' to avoid fighting with each other and shun politics of foul language. "Rather than playing dharna dharna, we should sit on the table and have a political dialogue to bring improvement in our system, democracy, and institutions through amendments," he said while addressing a large crowd in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Sindh on Sunday. The PPP chief's recommendation comes as the newly formed alliance of opposition parties Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Ain will launch a massive movement. This alliance kicked off its protest movement against alleged rigging in the February 8 general elections

from Balochistan by staging two separate public gatherings in Pishin and Chaman on Saturday. Without naming the multi-party confab, Bilawal described it as the "PNA (Pakistan National Alliance) 2" and added that the alliance was beating drums for alleged vote-rigging to cause "economic and political instability." He reminded the parties of the result of such movements, warning them of the risk of dictatorship in the country. "When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the PM of this country, some conspirators like 'nine stars' started a campaign and thought that they would oust Bhutto and come into power. But because of their campaign Pakistan had to bear dictatorship for 10 years and this risk exists today," he said while addressing a large crowd in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Sindh on Sunday.

We want supremacy of law & constitution: Sharif family afraid of Qaidi No. 804, says Umar Ayub



Independent Report 47 would no more run. The senior leader of PTI was addressing hurriedly called press conference before his departure from Quetta on Sunday morning. Umar Ayub had come to Quetta to participate in the protest public meetings held in Pishin and Chaman besides attending the crucial meeting of the six-parties alliance, which are part of the movement for protection of constitution in the country. He believed that the coming era of government is of PTI after the incumbent government of Form 47 would be winded-up. He claimed that the government formed through Form

President, PM felicitate Sikh community on Baisakhi festival

ISLAMABAD (Online) President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have felicitated Sikh community on the celebration of Baisakhi festival. In their message on this event, they said that this occasion gives message of love, happiness, peace and affection. He said that Pakistan felt pride over its diverse cultural heritage. The President said that Pakistan will ensure all steps to facilitate the Sikh community. In his felicitation message, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Government of Pakistan and all the provincial governments are ensuring provision of all facilities to the Sikh Yatries who were visiting their religious places in Pakistan. Shehbaz Sharif termed Baisakhi as the festival of spreading love and happiness. Prime Minister proudly said that Pakistan was a beautiful blend of different faiths and culture and the colours of Baisakhi further add to this beauty.

President Zardari says PPP will continue to support govt to achieve economic stability

GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari says Pakistan People's Party will continue to support the government for economic stability and prosperity in the country. He was addressing the public gathering on 45th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto in Larkana on Sunday. The President said Pakistan is blessed with vast potential of minerals and natural resources and we will emerge from current economic crisis through exploitation of these resources. The president emphasised that Pakistan's status as a poor nation was not predetermined, adding that despite Allah's provision of abundant wealth, the nation suffered from a lack of intellect. Zardari stressed the importance of cultivating a mindset that seeks to understand and address the country's challenges comprehensively. Paying tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he said Bhutto family always sacrificed their lives for the country and people. President Zardari thanked the people for pos-

Pakistan concerned over ongoing developments in ME, calls for restraint

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday said that Pakistan was watching with deep concern the ongoing developments in the Middle East (ME) and called upon all the parties to exercise the utmost restraint and move towards de-escalation. "Today's developments demonstrate the consequences of the breakdown of diplomacy. These also underline the grave implications in cases where the UN Security Council is unable to fulfill its responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security," the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement. It was now critically urgent to stabilize the situation and restore peace, it was further stressed. The spokesperson said that for months, Pakistan had underlined the necessity of international efforts to prevent the expansion of hostilities in the region and for immediate ceasefire in Gaza. On April 2, Pakistan had pointed to the dangers of an attack on the Iranian consular office in Syria as a major escalation in an already volatile region, it was added.

JIT comprising police, army officers formed to investigate Bahawalnagar incident

LAHORE (INP): A six-member Joint Inquiry Team (JIT) comprising officers of police, military and local administration has been constituted to probe the Bahawalnagar incident wherein a faceoff broke out between some police officials and military personnel, The News reported on Sunday. The Punjab Home Department has formed the team and appointed Special Secretary Interior Atta-ur-Rehman as its convener. The JIT also includes the Bahawalpur Division commissioner, DIG police special branch Punjab and officers of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Military Intelligence and Intelligence Bureau.



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Safaraz Ahmed Bugti along with MPAs Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Haji Ali Madad Jattak and Mir Ubaidullah Gorgaji coming to attend death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

Iran warns Israel against retaliation, global powers urge restraint

US will not take part in retaliatory action against Iran, says White House

Monitoring Desk and Israel. Iran launched the attack over Israeli strike on its consulate in Syria on April 1 that killed top Revolutionary Guards commanders and followed months of clashes between Israel and Iran's regional allies, triggered by the war in Gaza. However, the attack from hundreds of missiles and drones, mostly launched from inside Iran, caused only modest damage in Israel as most were shot down with the help of the US, Britain and Jordan. An Air Force base in southern Israel was hit, but

continued to operate as normal and a 7-year old child was seriously hurt by shrapnel. There were no other reports of serious damage. "We intercepted, we repelled, together we shall win," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on social media ahead of a planned 1230 GMT meeting of the war cabinet to discuss a response to the attack. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said despite thwarting the attack, the military campaign was not over and "we must be prepared for every scenario".

JERUSALEM: Iran warned Israel and the United States on Sunday of a much larger response if there is any retaliation for its mass drone and missile attack on Israeli territory overnight, as Israel said "the campaign is not over yet". The threat of open warfare erupting between the arch Middle East foes and dragging in the United States has put the region on edge as Washington said America did not seek conflict with Iran but would not hesitate to protect its forces



KARACHI: Palestine Foundation stages a protest demonstration against Israeli genocide in Gaza at Karachi Press Club

CM Balochistan attends DA of ZAB

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti reached Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on Sunday. The members of provincial assembly, Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Ali Madad Jatak, Ubaidullah Gorgaji, Secretary Information PPP, Sarbuland Khan Jozgezi and other leaders were also accompanied by the Chief Minister. They participated in the 45th death anniversary of the founding leader of PPP, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. They also paid rich tributes to him on his death anniversary besides offering fatha for the departed soul. Meanwhile, in a message issued on eve of his death anniversary, Chief Minister said that the parliamentary system of the country is because of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He said that Shaheed Bhutto had given the constitution to the country which guarantees basic human rights of every citizen.

Saudi Arabia commits \$1b investment in Reko Diq project

ISLAMABAD (INP): Saudi Arabia is set to inject a hefty \$1 billion into the Reko Diq Copper-Gold Project nestled in the scenic Chagai District of Balochistan Province, Pakistan. The investment is anticipated to take place next month, pending the clearance of any hurdles by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). To ensure a seamless process for Saudi Arabia's investment, the Prime Minister will establish a dedicated committee within the Ministry of Finance. This committee will encompass all relevant stakeholders from Pakistan, ensuring a collaborative approach. This milestone underscores the fruitful endeavors of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in fostering a conducive environment for foreign investment within the nation. Such an injection of capital is poised to not only

PDMA issues advisory in view of risks of sky lightning during rains in Balochistan province

Independent Report QUETTA: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued advisory for protection from the sky lightning during rains in the Balochistan province. According to the directives issued by PDMA on Sunday, it was mentioned that there are risks of lightning during rains in the province. The PDMA pointed out that casualties are being reported due to lightning in the province. It was also pointed out that lightning generally takes place at open and high places. Therefore, general public should adopt preventive measures to save them from lightning, it was advised. It was further advised to the citizens to avoid from taking shelter and sitting under trees during lightning. The PDMA also issued directives to the people not to move in the plane fields, coasts and other open places and not use mobile phone games, landline phone, computer and laptop in open. Moreover, the people were also advised not to travel on motorcycle and bicycle, etc. during lightning.



LAHORE: People carrying their luggage coming back from their home towns after spend their Eid-ul-Fitr holidays at Lahore Railway Station, in the Provincial Capital.

Pakistan economic growth forecast to rise 2.8% in FY2025, ADB reports

ISLAMABAD (INP): In Pakistan, growth is forecast to rise at 1.9% in FY2024 (ending on 30 June 2024) and 2.8% in FY2025, up from the 0.2% contraction last fiscal year. Gwadar Pro stated on Sunday quoting Asian Development Bank (ADB) economic forecasts report for Asia April 2024.

According to the report, the shift back to positive growth will come from a recovery in both agriculture and industry. However, domestic demand will remain constrained by the surge in living costs and tight macroeconomic policies. Growth is projected to remain subdued in FY2024 and pick up in

FY2025, provided economic reforms take effect. Real GDP is projected to grow by 1.9% in FY2024 driven by a rebound in private sector investment linked to progress on reform measures and transition to a new and more stable government. An expansion in private consumption and a rise in workers' remittances from a move toward a market-determined exchange rate should buttress growth.

However, low confidence, to support recovery in industrial output in the latter half of the year. Construction will remain weak due to elevated construction costs, higher tax rates on

property transfers implemented in the FY2024 budget, and rationalization of public investment to consolidate the fiscal position. Growth in services is projected to strengthen in FY2024 as recovery in agriculture and industry benefit services.

If reforms are implemented, growth is forecast to restart gradually this fiscal year and improve slightly next year. Inflation is projected to moderate somewhat this year, and more next year, under stabilization policies.

Improving women's financial inclusion is critical to strengthen growth.



CHINIOT: Farmers harvesting wheat crop starting from 1st of Besakh Month.

PAJCCI commend Railways over increasing its revenue, suggests launching of cargo trains

PESHAWAR (APP): Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) has commended Pakistan Railways over increasing its annual revenue to highest peak of Rs. 66 billion in nine months of current year and has suggested for launching of cargo trains to further piling up of earnings.

In a press statement issued here on Sunday, Coordinator PAJCCI KP, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said it is appreciating development that Pakistan Railways has increased its annual revenue to record height.

The phenomenal jump in earnings reflect revival of people's confidence on Railways in the wake of better management decisions taken by Chairman Mazhar Ali Shah and GM, Amir

Baloch for provision of improved travelling facilities, opined Zia who is also Member Advisory Committee of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Pakistan Railways.

He said Railways is safest and cheapest travelling facility in the country but due to some management loopholes, travelers had diverted to buses and other mode of travelling.

If such decisions were kept on taking, more people will prefer travelling in trains and revenue will increase with passage of time, he opined.

Coordinator PAJCCI also suggested Pakistan Railways to focus on launching of cargo trains from Karachi to Peshawar for facilitation of business community especially those dealing in Pak-Afghan trade.

He said Railways should also cater to transportation of loose cargo being sent by exporters and importers within the country.

By focusing on plying of cargo trains, Railways can triple its annual earnings from existing one besides providing relief to people especially business community who have to pay exorbitant rates to truck owners for transportation of goods.

Zia said in the wake of increase in prices of petroleum products, fare for transportation of goods from port city (Karachi) to Peshawar through heavy vehicles has increased manifold, inflicting huge burden on business community of the country.

Punjab CM felicitates PM over improving economic indicators

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, while paying tributes to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on improving Pakistan's economic indicators, said on Sunday that under the vibrant leadership of PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's economy had once again started treading on the path of progress.

The fruits of economic progress during the tenure of PML-N government are prominently coming to surface, Maryam said adding that "the common man would be provided relief with reduction in electricity rates and price-hike. Big international financial institutions including IMF, ADB had acknowledge Pakistan's economic policies."

She said, "Owing to PM Shehbaz Sharif's economic policies, the investors' confidence is enhancing. For the first time in the history, 100 index Stock Exchange has crossed its 70 thousand psychological barrier."

The chief minister said, "Good news are awaiting Pakistanis and their is a strong likelihood of reduction in inflation rate up to 12.2 per cent next year. For the first time, Rs 500 reduction occurred in the price of 20-kg flour bag and there is further possibility of Rs 300 reduction in the flour price according to market indicators."

"The Economic & Social Survey of Asia & Pacific Region termed Pakistan's economic indicators excellent. In the UN Report, Pakistan's economic progress has been predicted in the next fiscal year. The growth rate would increase from 2 per cent to 2.3 per cent during the current and next financial year in Pakistan."



MULTAN: Labourers off-loading watermelons from a delivery truck at the fruit market.

Increase in taxes hurt cars' sale, purchase business: APCDA

MULTAN (APP): All Pakistan Car Dealers Association (APCDA) demanded of government to reduce duties, taxes, registration and transfer fees on cars also increased manifold. A good number of dealers have left the profession.

They demanded of government to pay focus on condition of car dealers and reduce prices of the cars. Different measures on part of the government could help improve business of car's sale purchase. They also called for reforms in excise and taxation department.

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LAHORE: People are buying vegetables in Sunday weekly bazaar at Shadman area, in the Provincial Capital.

'Asia has consequential position in the world'

LAHORE (APP): Kyrgyzstan's Honorary Consul Meher Kashif Younis has said that Asia holds a consequential position in the world due to its large population, strategic locations, rich mineral resources and diversity. Presiding over a workshop on "Importance of BRICS for Pakistan" organized by Gold Ring Economic Forum here Sunday, he added that Pakistan, as an important partner in the region has sought membership in order to align with this trend. With its abundant natural resources, strategic location and fifth-largest population, Pakistan's absence from BRICS could have repercussions in the future.

He said the individual who coined BRICS has predicted that these nations' economies will dominate the world by 2050. He said a golden opportunity has been presented to these advancing countries under the leadership of this group.

Agricultural emergency unit established to help farmers in view of rains

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government has set up an Agricultural Emergency Rapid Response Unit to help the farmers in view of the rains in the province and the leaves of all the employees and officers of the agriculture department have been cancelled.

On the directives of the Sindh Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Baksh Mahar, the leaves of all the officers and employees of the Sindh Agriculture Department have been cancelled and the staff has been instructed to remain alert. A spokesman for the Sindh Agriculture Department said that the DG Agriculture Head of DG Agriculture Emergency Rapid Response and DGs of Research, Engineering Wing and On Farm Management Wing will be part of the team.

He further said that the field assistants of the Department of Agriculture will go door to door to provide information about safety measures to the farmers.



FAISALABAD: Women are buying clothes on a stall at Sunday weekly bazaar in the city.

Central bank needs to review credit policies in SMEs favor: Anjum Nisar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has said that the central bank needs to review its credit policies by fixing a special quota to finance the small and medium enterprises, as only the large industries have been availing government's all major concessional export loaning facilities, with very limited financing is left for the SMEs which are the backbone of the economy, contributing around 40 percent to the national gross domestic product (GDP).

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that the government with a view to help grow the businesses will have to take solid measures to strengthen the industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. He said the government will have to make a visible reduction in markup rate to help grow the businesses, particularly the SME

sector, as Pakistan needs millions of jobs annually. Mian Anjum Nisar said that we need to highlight the critical role of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in driving sustainable economic development in Pakistan. With an estimated 5.2 million businesses, the SME sector was a cornerstone of our economy, fostering employment, growth, and export diversification, he added.

He observed that despite their significance, more than 5 million SMEs face a significant credit gap, receiving limited credit, far below the neighboring countries. The State Bank of Pakistan is committed to increasing SME credit share to 17% by 2023. To achieve this, we must advocate for targeted and fixed SME allocations in concessional financing schemes, particularly those aimed at the export-oriented sector.

The FPCCI former President said that the State Bank of Pakistan has launched various policies for the promotion of SME finance.

FBR completes preparations for action against tax evaders

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has completed preparations for action against tax evaders.

According to FBR sources, within a few days, final notices will be issued to tax evaders, traders, and industrialists, who will also be sent notices. Their assets, and extravagant expenditures, do not match their tax data; some traders' tax is only a few thousand while their annual income runs into billions.

Sources say that many have purchased multiple plots and are also running businesses outside, sometimes allowed to pay their taxes, they turn their black money white.

Lists of most traders and industrialists have been made, including Akbari, Shah Alam Market, Azam Cloth Market, Anarkali, Liberty Market Road, and Gulberg. Ferozpur Road, Model Town, and all other plazas are included.

SNGPL imposes Rs 132,000 fine on eight consumers

MULTAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) has imposed a fine Rs 132,000 on eight different consumers for illegal use of gas.

Official sources told on Sunday that two consumers were using domestic gas meters on a commercial basis. Their connections were cut by the department team. Similarly, another four consumers were offering illegal connections to some other homes. Action was taken against another two consumers for violations.

The team imposed a fine of Rs 132,000 on the consumers.

The SNGPL administration also vowed to continue action against the illegal consumers.

Economic growth linked to durable regional peace

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has advocated the cause of achieving durable peace in the region, a prerequisite to economic growth, prosperity and development for all countries of South Asia.

Talking to a delegation of traders led by Muslim Khan Buner from KP here Sunday, he said South Asia has long been plagued by instability and conflicts that have hindered the region's progress and potential. One of the major concerns contributing to this instability has been the presence of terrorist sanctuaries on Afghan soil, which have posed a severe threat not only to neighboring countries including Pakistan, he added.

He said counterterrorism cooperation and collaboration closely with regional and international stakeholders, especially Pakistan, to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries can help eradicate the breeding grounds for extremist elements and bring about much-needed stability.

About economic integration, he said, "We must embrace economic integration initiatives within the South Asian region and enhanced economic cooperation can create an environment conducive to peace, prosperity, and development for all."

He believed that by taking these steps,

neighboring countries including Pakistan, he added. He said counterterrorism cooperation and collaboration closely with regional and international stakeholders, especially Pakistan, to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries can help eradicate the breeding grounds for extremist elements and bring about much-needed stability.

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Prices of most capital goods fall in China

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): Most of the capital goods monitored by China's statistics authorities registered price decreases from late-March to early-April, official data shows.

Of the 50 major goods classified in nine categories, including seamless steel tubes, gasoline and fertilizer, 26 saw price declines, 20 reported heightened prices, and 4 remained unchanged, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Hog prices increased 0.7 percent to 15.3 yuan (about 2.16 U.S. dollars) per kg during this period, the NBS said.

The figures, released every 10 days, are based on the survey of nearly 2,000 wholesalers and distributors in 31 provincial-level regions across the country.



MULTAN: A worker preparing khas for the air cooler at his workplace.

Large scale structural changes vital in power sector: Chairman PIAF

LAHORE (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Faheemur Rehman Saigol has stressed the need for large scale structural changes in power sector, controlling line losses of DISCOs by using modern technology, and customer-oriented business approach, as the public chequer has incurred a loss of over Rs400 billion in the fiscal year 2022-23 by the power distribution companies.

Quoting the media report, he observed that that the performance of distribution companies (DISCOs) throughout 2022-23 remained very poor, and the expected power sector reforms were not achieved. Given the ongoing poor performance, it is apparent that, under the existing circumstances,

the current DISCO setup is unlikely to be able to deliver the desired results.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that no significant improvement has been witnessed on part of some DISCOs in this regard. During FY2022-23, the overall actual losses of DISCOs were 16.38% against the actual loss of 16.69% in FY 2021-22. The actual T&D losses are much higher than the allowed T&D losses for FY 2022-23, which is 12.21%.

He said that unfortunately, the majority of DISCOs have not adhered to the NEPA given targets, except FESCO, GEPCO, and K-Electric which have managed to keep their losses below the levels or equal to targets set by NEPA. However, other DISCOs have exceeded these limits.

Price controller revises bread loaf rates

RAWALPINDI (APP): The controller of prices and supplies/ Deputy Commissioner has revised the rates of open market loafs (Naan-Roti) in the city. Following the Punjab Price Control of Essential Commodities Ordinance 2023 (V of 2024), the price controller issued a notification regarding the rates.

According to the notification issued on Sunday, the unit price for 100g Roti Tandoori (per loaf) will be Rs. 16.0 and that of 120g Naan (per loaf) will be Rs. 20.0.

The notification intimates that new prices for mentioned essential commodities for the open market will come into force with immediate effect in revenue limits of the district. No person or shopkeeper shall charge or cause to be charged the prices of the aforementioned items offered for sale.

Locals demand restoration of train

SARGODHA (APP): Social circles and traders have demanded railways authorities to restore the Sandal Express train in the larger interest of people of the area.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, traders including Chaudhry Muzammil of Sargodha, Muhammad Yaseen of Jhang, Muhammad Noman of Khanewal and Muhammad Atta of Multan said that the Sandal Express used to run from Sargodha to Multan via Shaheenabad, Sillanwali, Shah Nikdur, Shah Jewna, Jhang, Shortkot and Khanewal but railway authorities suspended it operation three years ago

due to unknown reasons. They said they would send and bring their goods by the train at a cheaper fare, and now they had to bear an extra burden of fare by road. They demanded railways authorities to restore the train as early as possible for the interest of traders, commuters and other people.

Tanveer Ahmed, a resident of Shah Nikdur, who used to travel daily from Shah Nikdur to Sargodha by the train, said the train was the best and cheaper source of travel for daily commuters, and now, after the suspension of the train operation he had to commute daily by bus or van.



LAHORE: People are buying steel crockery in Sunday weekly bazaar at Shadman area, in the Provincial Capital.



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH: President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Safaraz Ahmed Bugti, President PPP Balochistan Mir Changez Khan Jamali and others offering Dua on eve of death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto

Death toll from lightning in country reaches 26 as one more person dies

QUETTA (INP): The death toll from lightning reached 26 in the country on Sunday when one more person lost his life after he was struck by lightning in Garhi Yasin area of Shikarpur. The body was shifted to a local hospital where the person was identified as Zulfiqar Ali Jakro. On Saturday, at least 25 people were killed in Punjab and Balochistan when they were struck by lightning. In Punjab alone, 17 people fell prey to the deadly strikes as confirmed by a spokesperson for the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). Lightning struck people in several areas of the province namely Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Lodhran, Bahawalpur, and Bahawalnagar. Heart-wrenching accounts emerged from the Faqeer Wali area near Haroonabad, where a father and his two sons lost their lives, while the mother and another son sustained injuries. Rescue 1122 confirmed nine fatalities in Faqeer Wali. In another incident, a family of four, a man his wife, and their two children perished in Rahim Yar Khan.



QUETTA: Senior leader PML-N Shabbir Rajput greets Saeed Khan Nassar on becoming Deputy Chairman Khan

Celebrations of Khalsa Janumdin & Vasakhi Mela conclude

LAHORE (APP): The celebrations of the 325th Khalsa Janumdin and Vasakhi Mela concluded at Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Hasanabdul. According to a press release issued here on Sunday, Sikh pilgrims from all over the world including India, ambassadors from Australia, Nepal and other 10 countries attended the event. They thanked the government of Pakistan and the Evacuee Property Trust Board administration for decorating the Gurdwara Panja Sahib in a beautiful manner and providing accommodation to the pilgrims. Addressing the main ceremony, Federal Minister for Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif welcomed the guests. While congratulating them, he said that minorities in Pakistan have complete religious freedom and their places of worship and property are safe. "Measures are being taken for the welfare of non-Muslims," he added. Senator Sardar Guldeep Singh, Secretary Board Farid Iqbal, Additional Secretary Shri Rana Shahid Saleem, Administrator Karachi Muhammad Asif Khan, Deputy Administrator Hasan Abdal Yasir Asghar Monga, Asher Younis MPA, Baba Girpal Singh, Sardar Sawant Singh Dr. Mampal Singh and other political and religious minority leaders participated in the ceremony. Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, Pradhan of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs.



QUETTA: Vehicles on their way during a rain experience in the city.

Canada sacks Indian staffers working at its diplomatic missions in India

Monitoring Desk LONDON: Ties between Canada and India have deteriorated further as the former has dismissed dozens of Indian staffers from service who were working at its diplomatic missions in India over the Indian regime's plan to assassinate pro-Khalistani Sikhs on Canadian soil. Relations between Canada and India started deteriorating last year when tens of thousands of Canadian Sikhs voted for Khalistan Referendum in several Canadian cities on the call of Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), led by Gurbatwant Singh Pannun who is a dual Canadian and US national. The relations hit rock bottom when Indian assassinated SFJ and Khalistan Referendum's Canada coordinator Hardeep Singh Nijjar at the Canada's biggest Gurdwara in June 2023 and also tried to kill Pannun in New York. A spokesperson for the Canadian High Commission stated that the reduction in the number of Indian employees was required in light of the country's shrinking Canadian workforce. "I can confirm that the Government of Canada has implemented some staff reductions across our network of missions in India," the official said. The spokesperson, however, said that the high commission expressed its sincere gratitude for the resilience, dedication, and service of its local staff in India. After the murder of top Khalistani Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged that India was behind Nijjar's assassination.

Repatriation efforts continue as illegal Afghans return home

ISLAMABAD (INP): The repatriation of Afghan nationals from Pakistan continues at a steady pace, with significant progress made as of April 13, 2024. A total of 535,940 illegal Afghans have now returned to their homeland, marking a significant step in the ongoing efforts. Over the past ten days, from April 3 to April 13, a total of 8,581 Afghan citizens have made the journey back home. Among them, 3,127 men, 1,972 women, and 3,482 children have returned. In a coordinated effort, 310 families have been safely repatriated to Afghanistan, utilizing 287 vehicles for their journey.

Syedal Khan Nasar vows to raise forceful voice for real issues of public in Senate

Independent Report QUETTA: The Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedal Khan Nasar has vowed to raise forceful voice for the real issues being faced by the masses of Balochistan in Senate. The Deputy Chairman Senate was speaking to local media persons here at his residence on Saturday night. It was his first media interaction after becoming Deputy Chairman Senate. Syedal Khan Nasar said that the people of province are facing issues of health, education, unemployment and others, and by the grace of Allah, he would take up the real issues of people in Senate and other forums. He also pledged to play his part for making legislation in the Upper House. To a query, Syedal Khan Nasar said that whatever development works were carried out in the country including Balochistan were done during the era of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). He said that a lot of development works were done in Balochistan. The work on mega projects of roads, Kachhi canal, Reko dik and others were also done in the era of PML-N, he added. The Deputy Chairman Senate said that the PML-N's Quaid, Nawaz Sharif gave government to the nationalist party despite getting heavy mandate in elections in 2013, which had never thought of it (government) in the dream even. He believed that there would be lot of work during next one and two years of PML-N-led government in the country. He said that PML-N has steered the country out of financial crunch, and would do so in future too.

Govt committed to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths: Khawaja

ATTOCK (APP): Federal Minister for Defense, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, has said the present government is committed to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths living in the country. He was talking to newsmen after participating in the Bhog ceremony in connection with the Besakhi festival at Gurdwara Panja Sahib Hasanabdul on Sunday. In his address, he expressed that the Sikh Marriage Act had been passed in 2018, and now it would be implemented soon after the approval of the provincial cabinet. He said that around six gurdwaras across the country would be open and handed over to the local Sikh community for the observance of rituals. Earlier, speaking at the Bhog ceremony, Khawaja Asif said that the Pakistani people and government were proud to host the Sikh pilgrims on their holy land. "The present government believes in the freedom of the minority and would extend all its resources for the better preservation of their sacred places," he added. The Sikh religion fa-

mous Baisakhi celebrations, to mark the advent of the order of the *Khalsa by 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh Ji, were observed at Gurdwara Panja Sahib here today. Around ten thousand Sikh yatraes—among them over 2400 Indians and others from other parts of the world, including Pakistan, India, Canada, and the United Kingdom participated in the festivities. Baisakhi processions called Nagar Keertan were taken out on the premises of Gurdwara Panja Sahib with traditional performances and religious rites.



HASSANABDAL: Federal Defence Minister, Khawaja Asif Mehmood addressing the Sikh pilgrims at Gurdwara Panja Sahib on the occasion of Baisakhi Mela.

No lasting peace in region without Kashmir settlement: APHC

SRINAGAR (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that lasting peace in the region is not possible till settlement of the lingering Kashmir dispute as per the Kashmiris' aspirations.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman, Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas, in a statement issued in Srinagar said the Bharatiya Janata Party regime cannot hide the reality about occupied Jammu and Kashmir through its propaganda machinery during the Lok Sabha election process. He said India is misleading world by propagating that peace is returning to IIOJK while the ground reality of Kashmir is that the BJP regime, with the help of Indian army, police and National Investigation Agency, has intensified its efforts to harass Kashmiris and colonize Kashmir since 5 August 2019 and create an atmosphere of fear and terror in the territory. He said the Indian BJP government's policies in IIOJK have put peace.

UN chief 'condemns' Iran's attack on Israel

NEW YORK (INP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned Iran's attack on Israel following Syria Embassy attack. UN chief in a statement said: "I strongly condemn the serious escalation represented by the large-scale attack launched on Israel by the Islamic Republic of Iran this evening. I call for an immediate cessation of these hostilities."

"I am deeply alarmed about the very real danger of a devastating region-wide escalation. I urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid any action that could lead to major military confrontations on multiple fronts in the Middle East." "I have repeatedly stressed that neither the region nor the world can afford another war." Iran launched explosive drones and fired missiles at Israel late on Saturday in its first direct attack on Israeli territory, a retaliatory strike that raised the threat of a wider regional conflict, as the U.S. pledged "ironclad" backing for Israel. Sirens wailed in Israel heard distant heavy thuds and bangs from what local media called aerial interceptions of explosive drones. Authorities said a 7-year-old girl was critically injured. U.S. President Joe Biden, who spoke by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said he would convene a meeting of leaders of the Group of Seven major economies on Sunday to coordinate a diplomatic response to what he called Iran's brazen attack.

World Bank approves \$1b loan for Dasu Hydropower Project

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan received a much-needed boost for its energy sector as the World Bank approved a \$1 billion loan for the 2,160-megawatt Dasu Hydropower Project. This critical infrastructure project aims to provide Pakistan with affordable and reliable electricity. The loan approval comes after some delays, with initial reports suggesting a May approval. However, government sources now confirm the World Bank's board greenlit the financing in June. This represents the third major investment by the World Bank in the Dasu project, highlighting its significance for Pakistan's energy future. Pakistan's current energy woes stem largely from the high cost of electricity generated using imported fuel. This burden is felt across the country, with domestic consumers, factories, and even institutions like mosques and hospitals resorting to installing solar panels to escape the expensive grid.

Earthquake shakes Mingora and adjoining areas

SWAT (INP): An earthquake shook Mingora city and surrounding areas in Swat district on Sunday. After the earthquake, panic spread among the people, prompting them to come out of their houses and shops. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, Islamabad, the earthquake registered with a magnitude of 4.0 on the Richter scale. The Centre defined that the earthquake's region as Hindu Kush Region, Afghanistan and its epicentre was 217km deep.



CHINIOT: Federal Minister Maritimes, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh participating in 16th Annual River Chenab Marathon Race (7 KM long from Toll Palza to Khatmay Nabooawat Chwok).

Adil Raja loses crucial stage of defamation case to Brig ® Rashid Naseer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Controversial Youtuber Major ® Adil Raja has suffered a crushing blow as a UK High Court Judge rejected all his applications including his application to stay a defamation trial progressing against him by former senior military officer Brigadier ® Rashid Naseer. The judge ruled that Mr Raja had published words which were seriously defamatory of Rashid Naseer in nine publications on social media sites YouTube, Facebook and Twitter/X. Deputy High Court Judge Mr Richard Spearman KC ruled that Adil Farooq Raja should pay £5,000 for the now returned Brigadier for the rejected application to stay the defamation trial and the judge also ordered Adil Raja to pay a further interim payment on account of costs in the sum of £5,000 for the failed security for costs application. Adil Raja, the defendant, has until 17 April 2024 to pay this money. With help from his lawyer and PTI UK leader Mahtab Anwar Aziz who also represents PTI activist Shayan Ali, Adil Raja appeared before the court remotely by video link and argued that the case of Brig ® Rashid Naseer should be stayed on a number of grounds but the court rejected all his arguments which included allegations that Pakistan was an authoritarian state in which the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) controlled the Judiciary and the Government and allegations of election rigging in Pakistan.

In the case on meaning, the High Court Judge ruled that 9 out of the 10 publications published by Adil Raja were defamatory of Brig ® Rashid Naseer at common law and were matters of fact, rather than expressions of opinion. Brig ® Rashid Naseer's name had surfaced when former PM Imran Khan named him as Mr 'X' in making wild and baseless allegations – the allegations Khan and his party stepped back from and failed to prove at any forum. In deciding the meaning of the publications, Deputy High Court Judge Mr Richard Spearman KC ruled that Brig ® Rashid Naseer was defamed at UK common law when Adil Farooq Raja made the following allegations, without any evidence, in the publications in June 2022.

Israel requests UN Security Council meeting after Iran attack

Monitoring Desk GAZA: Israel has requested that the UN Security Council hold an emergency meeting on Sunday to condemn Iran's attack on Israel and designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) a terrorist organization. Israeli UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan sent an urgent letter to the president of the Security Council, Vanessa Frazier, calling for the meeting. "The Iranian attack is a serious threat to global peace and security and I expect the Council to use every means to take concrete action against Iran," he posted on X, formerly Twitter. Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles targeting Israel in response to a suspected Israeli attack on an Iranian compound in Syria earlier this month which killed two brigadier generals and five other members of Iran's powerful IRGC. Israel has been Iran's declared arch-enemy since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The decades-old tensions between the two countries have escalated following the outbreak of the Gaza war in October.

Buner IBO martyr laid to rest in native town

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Buner intelligence-based operation (IBO) martyr was laid to rest in his native town with full military honor on Sunday. On April 13th during an intelligence-based operation against terrorists in

nior officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army, relatives of the martyr and local people participated in the funeral prayer, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. "These sacrifices of our martyrs strengthen our determination in the war against terrorism and our love for motherland. Armed forces of Pakistan will continue to fight alongside the nation until the last terrorist is eliminated from the country," the ISPR said. A large number of se-



Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Lance Havaldar Mudassar Mehmood, age 35 years, resident of Rawalpindi district had embraced martyrdom while gallantly fighting against the terrorists. A large number of se-

Over 230 candidates vie for 23 vacant seats of NA, PAs: ECP

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 239 candidates were vying for 23 vacant seats in both national and provincial assemblies during the upcoming by-elections slated for April 21, an official of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said. A total of 239 candidates will contest in the by elections, with 50 of them competing for vacant National Assembly seats. Notably, the first lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has already been elected unopposed for NA 207, he said. He said that a total of 23 candidates were vying for the vacant seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, while 154 candidates were seeking their fortunes in Punjab. In Sindh, Zubair Ahmed Junejo secured his seat unopposed on PS-80. Twelve contenders are in the running for the empty seats in the Balochistan Assembly. The Commission has schedule to commence printing the ballot papers for the by-elections upon the finalization of candidate lists by the relevant returning officers on March 30, he added. He stated that necessary election materials had been provided to provincial election commissioners. Additionally, district Returning Officers and Returning Officers are fulfilling their duties according to the established election schedule. He said close coordination has been maintained by the commission with the Ministries of Interior and Defense as well as provincial law enforcement agencies. On March 13, the Commission announced the schedule for by-elections across 23 National and Provincial Assembly seats. These elections encompass six National Assembly seats, twelve Punjab Assembly seats, two seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.



PISHIN: Deputy Commissioner Juma Dad Khan Mandokhail visiting Khushdil Khan Dam after recent rains