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Member APNS & CPNE

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IHC judges propose contempt proceedings against meddling in court affairs

ISLAMABAD (INP): In compliance with the Supreme Court's April 3 order, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges, in a unanimous stance, proposed a "contempt proceeding" against any meddling in judicial affairs, revealed sources privy to the matter.

This was stated in the proposal submitted by the IHC judges to the Registrar of the Supreme Court earlier this week.

Subject to the institutional consensus, the high court should exercise its contempt of court powers to counter meddling, the sources said quoting the IHC proposal on how to stop meddling in the judicial matters.

Earlier this week the IHC full court meeting was held today with Chief Justice Aamer Farooq in the chair to finalise proposals before submission to the top court in connection with a matter related to the alleged interference of the spy agencies in judicial affairs.

Last month, six judges of the IHC — comprising Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz — wrote a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), seeking its guidance on "interference" of the intelligence agencies in the courts' affairs.

"We are writing to seek guidance from the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) with regard to the duty of a judge

to report and respond to actions on [the] part of members of the executive, including operatives of intelligence agencies, that seek to interfere with [the] discharge of his/her official functions and qualify as intimidation, as well as the duty to report any such actions that come to his/her attention in relation to colleagues and/or members of the courts that the high court supervises," read the letter.

Later, the apex court initiated suo motu proceedings on the letter and sought a proposal from the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC), the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), high courts and the federal government in this regard.

In their recommendations came to the fore today, the IHC judges also proposed a "high court administrative committee" to make a final decision on matters related to the alleged interference in the court's affairs, the sources added.

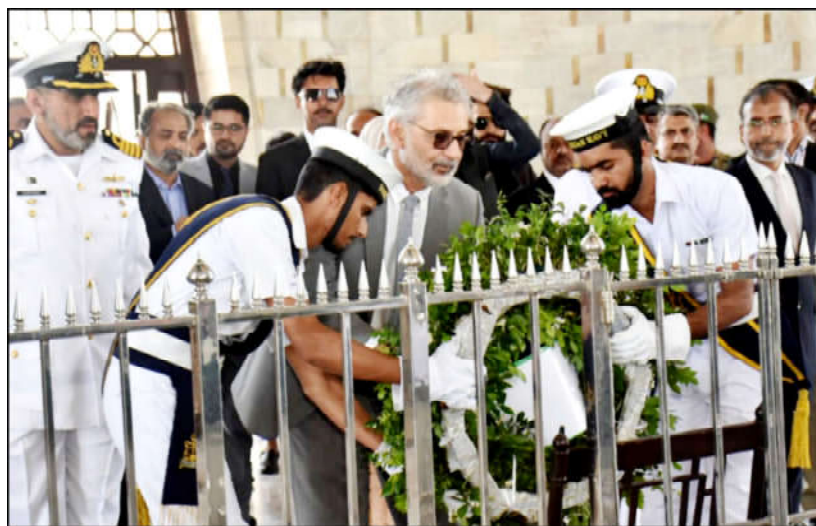
The committee then decide whether to look into the matter on the administrative or judicial side.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, the committee should be empowered to send the case to the "full court", the well-placed sources said quoting the judges' recommendations.

A proposed 6 to 7-page draft proposing amendments to the judges' code of conduct was also included in the recommendations.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to attend the special meeting of World Economic Forum on Global Cooperation, Growth and Energy



KARACHI: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi Faez Isa visiting a museum at the mausoleum of father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Justice Mansoor for revisiting judges' appointment process

LAHORE (INP): Supreme Court Justice Mansoor Ali Shah on Saturday called for reviewing the mechanism for appointment of judges in higher judiciary and said he wasn't happy with the institution's history.

Justice Shah said judges shouldn't be appointed on the basis of recommendations, if the intent was to keep the system running. The one who wasn't performing should be thrown out of the judicial system, he noted.

A judge could make a system collapse and also make it function efficiently, Justice Shah said and stressed that everyone had to forget about managing the institution individually.

In his address to the Fifth Asma Jahangir Conference, an annual event organised in the city in recognition of her services for human rights, the senior judge said judiciary had in the past passed some good and bad verdicts.

"It is true," Justice Shah said, adding that there were some dark spots in the history of Pakistan's judiciary. The constitution says judiciary should be fully independent, the judge noted and said the poor judgements were the cause of controversy. However, Justice Shah noted that removal of any judge wasn't easy and produced grouping, as he highlighted the need for zero-tolerance policy towards corruption.

"We would have to introduce reforms in the institution," he told the audience and added that people sell their cattle to reach courts and "you people say that there is a strike".

To improve the working and create better environment within judiciary, the senior judge also called for inducting more women in judiciary from the district level to the top and establishing commercial courts in the country.



LAHORE: Supreme Court Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah addressing the Asma Jahangir conference at the local hotel of the Provincial Capital.

Three-day annual Hinglaj mata festival of Hindu community continues in Lasbela

Independent Report
QUETTA: The three-day annual Hinglaj mata mela (festival) of the Hindu community is continued in Lasbela.

The Hindu yatrees from different parties of the country including Balochistan are participating in their religious rituals.

Necessary arrangements including security have been made to facilitate yatrees turning up there for performing Hindu religious rituals.

According to the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) and Focal

Person for Hinglaj Mata festival, Syed Yaseen Akhtar, a medical camp has been set up for three-day festival of Hinglaj mata where trained staff and doctors have been deputed.

In all 100 volunteers are also assisting the administration to provide facilities to yatrees.

It may be mentioned here that Hinglaj mata mandir is stated to be one of the most sacred religious places of Hindu community in the world where over 200,000 Hindu yatrees visit in spring for performing their religious rituals.

CJP Qazi Faez Isa visits Mazar e Quaid, pays homage to father of nation

KARACHI (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Saturday visited the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and laid a wreath of flowers at the grave.

The CJP offered Fateha at Quaid's mausoleum and paid homage to the founder of the nation. He also recorded his impressions in the visitors' book.

Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa was also accompanied by his spouse during his visit to the mausoleum.

Sessions judge kidnapped by armed men near Tank-DI Khan border Monitoring Desk

DI Khan: District and Sessions Judge Shakirullah Marwat posted in South Waziristan was kidnapped by armed men near border area of Tank and Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, police said on Saturday.

DI Khan Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Mohammad Adnan confirmed the incident, which took place in a village named Bagwal in the border area between Tank and DI Khan when the sessions judge was on his way back to DI Khan, returning from duty.

He said that the abductors left the judge's car and driver on the spot.

Police said that no one has claimed the responsibility of the judge's abduction.

Reacting to the unfortunate incident, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi expressed concern and grief over the matter.

Security Forces reacted

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a statement, said the terrorists tried to stop passenger vehicles plying on Sanjavi Road, Harnai.

Security Forces reacted

SC orders removal of encroachments across country in 3 days

KARACHI (Agencies): The Supreme Court on Saturday directed the authorities concerned to remove all encroachments across the country from public roads and pavements within three days. The written order was issued two days after the top court had directed the Sindh government to remove barricades placed outside various buildings including Sindh Rangers headquarters, Chief Minister House and Governor House.

The hearing was held by a three-member bench, led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, on

Thursday while the written order was issued today.

Following the directives, the Sindh government removed the barricades placed outside the CM House. In its order, the apex court said that the encroachments on public roads and pavements are made by those paid out of the public exchequer.

"Occupants of properties also assume that the pavement running in front of their property is theirs, to do with it as they please. Generators are also installed thereon. Pavements are for the use of the public; access thereto and use thereof cannot be prevented or restricted," said the order.



QUETTA: Parents and relatives of Shaheed police recruit Zaki Haroon meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Safaraz Ahmed Bugti

Parents of martyr police recruit Zaki meets Bugti: Sacrifices of martyrs for restoration of peace can't be forgotten: Chief Minister

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that the sacrifices of martyrs can't be forgotten for restoration of peace in the province. He said that those rendering sacrifice of their lives are our real heroes. It is responsibility of the government to take well care of the heirs of martyrs.

The Chief Minister was speaking to the parents and family members of the martyr police recruit Zaki Haroon, who called on him here on Saturday.

The family of police recruit informed the Chief

Minister about their issues.

Expressing heartfelt condolence with the bereaved family of Zaki Haroon, the Chief Minister announced to provide government job to the sister of martyr recruit and three other family members of the affected family.

He directed to post the other government servant brother of martyr in police department at safer place.

The Chief Minister also directed to complete the necessary procedure of payment of financial compensation to the martyr recruit as per the government policy.

Security forces kill terrorist trying to stop passenger vehicles in Harnai

RAWALPINDI (PR): Security forces on Saturday killed a terrorist and injured another during an exchange of fire in Harnai district of Balochistan.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a statement, said the terrorists tried to stop passenger vehicles plying on Sanjavi Road, Harnai.

Security Forces reacted

immediately and effectively engaged the terrorists. Resultantly, one terrorist was killed, while another got injured.

The timely response by the security forces thwarted nefarious intent of the terrorists, saving innocent lives. Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister Communication & Works Mir Saleem Khosa being briefed by XEN C&W Ghambir Khan Bugti regarding ongoing development projects in Balochistan Assembly

PM Shehbaz Sharif arrives in KSA to attend WEF special meeting

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday arrived in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to participate in a special meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) on 'Global Collaboration, Growth, and Energy for Development', being held from April 28-29.

Deputy Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Waleed Al Khareeji, Pakistan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia and embassy staff received the prime minister and his delegation at the Riyadh Royal airport.

The prime minister was invited to attend the WEF meeting by Crown Prince and Prime Minister

of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Professor Klaus Schwab.

"The Prime Minister will be accompanied by a high level delegation including Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb.

The prime minister and the ministers will participate in WEF discussions on issues related to trade and investment measures, new investment frameworks, restructuring of supply chains, sustainable growth, and the energy landscape," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in

a press release.

The high level participation in the Forum will afford an important opportunity to present Pakistan's priorities specifically in global health architecture, inclusive growth, revitalizing regional collaboration and the need for striking a balance between promoting growth and energy consumption.

On the margins of the main event, the prime minister and his delegation will hold bilateral meetings with world leaders, including the Saudi leadership, heads of international organizations, and other prominent figures participating in the event.

CJ BHC orders to post Civil Judge in Ziarat

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Justice Balochistan High Court (BHC), Mr Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar has ordered to appoint Civil Judge in Ziarat.

The Chief Justice also announced to give Ziarat Judicial Magistrate as the Session Division.

Mr Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar was on visit to Ziarat on Saturday.

The judges of High Court were also accompanied by the Chief Justice.

He visited the Judicial Complex and Al-Hijra College in Ziarat city.

During the visit to Al-

Hijra College, CJ BHC met the teachers and students and had interaction with them.

Meanwhile, speaking at the ceremony, the Chief Justice stressed the need to take steps for preservation of the juniper forests in Ziarat.

He on the occasion also asked the lawyers to submit petition on the issues of Ziarat so as to take action on them.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Justice Abdullah Baloch said that forests of juniper are precious asset of Ziarat as such these must be protected.



ZIARAT: Principal Prof. Shabbir Ahmed Bareech presenting shield to Chief Justice Balochistan High Court, Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar during his visit to Al-Hajra Residential College

FM stresses upon need of broadening economic diplomacy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Saturday emphasized on the need of enhancing economic diplomacy and efforts to bolster trade and investment ties with the foreign countries.

The foreign minister chaired an online meeting with Heads of the Missions to inter-alia review the progress made on market sounding efforts being made through Pakistan's Missions Abroad for outsourcing of airports, a press release said.

The secretary Aviation / DGCAA presented the progress review and informed that concerted efforts by Heads of the Missions in Turkiye, Malaysia, UAE, Qatar, Paris, Spain, Germany, Kuwait, UK and Switzerland have reinvigorated in

terests of well-known airport operators, who had shown positive interests in bidding of Islamabad International Airport.

The renewed interest of foreign airport operators testified economic stability and confidence of investors in the political stability in Pakistan.

The session was followed by 9th Meeting of Steering Committee on Outsourcing of Airports, which was inter-alia attended by Secretary Aviation / DGCAA, Secretary Law & Justice, Additional Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs ME, Additional Secretary BOI, DG ASE, DG ANF, Additional DGCAA, Additional DG FIA (Immigration), senior officer of Pakistan Customs and IFC Team.



KARACHI: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi Faez Isa visiting a museum at the mausoleum of father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

PAK vs NZ: Pakistan level T20I series in 9-run victory against New Zealand

Sports Desk
LAHORE: Pakistan defeated New Zealand on Saturday to level the five-match Twenty20 International series in a display of terrific performance by the home side bowlers at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. The five-match series drew 2-2 with Pakistan winning the second and fifth T20I while New Zealand got the better of home side in third and fourth match. Meanwhile, the first encounter in Pindi was called off due to rain. The five-match series drew 2-2 with Pakistan winning the second and fifth T20I while New Zealand got the better of the home side in the third and fourth matches. Meanwhile, the first encounter in Pindi was called off due to rain.

Chasing the 179-run target, the Kiwis were troubled by Afridi's first-over heroics as the 24-year-old removed Tom Blundell with an in-swinging beauty. With his wicket in the first over, Shaheen became the first bowler to take 50 wickets in T20 cricket. Behind him is India's Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who has 43 wickets. However, the Black Caps recovered quickly as Tim Seifert took charge of the innings and blasted Pakistan's Mohammad Amir for wickets all over the ground in his over. The right-hander scored a quick 52 off 33 but was removed by Usama Mir in the ninth over. The leg-spinner was Pakistan's second-best performer with the ball as he ended his spell with impressive figures of 2/21.

Despite losing wickets, the Black Caps didn't lose focus and continued to play attacking cricket with Josh Clarkson doing the job down the order. However, Clarkson couldn't take his side over the line as all the remaining batters were out and as a result, the visitors suffered a nine-run defeat. Batting first, Pakistan posted 178/5 with Babar Azam top-scoring for the side with 69 off 44 balls. The hosts had a disappointing start with Saim Ayub only making 1 run. He was dismissed by William O'Rourke in the second over. Usman Khan joined captain Babar Azam and the pair recovered well by scoring quickly. Usman, playing his fourth T20, made 31 off 24 balls with the help of four boundaries. Meanwhile, Babar looked solid tonight with his strokes. The 29-year-old registered his 34th fifty in T20Is and also claimed the record for most fours in the history of the format. On the other hand, Fakhar Zaman took charge in the second half of the innings and continued his form from the last game. He finished on 43 off 33 balls which included five boundaries. Shadab Khan played a 15-run cameo off just five balls which pushed Pakistan's total to 170+.

Shaheen Afridi was once again Pakistan's MVP with the ball as the left-arm took the game away from the visitors with his heroics in the 15th over as he sent James Neesham and Zakary Foulkes back to the pavilion on back-to-back deliveries. He ended his spell with 4/30 figures.



LAHORE: Cricket fans watching 5th T-20 match between Pakistan and New Zealand at Pindi Cricket Stadium in the city.

UN Report: Global Malnutrition hits record High, 282 Million affected in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): A staggering 282 million people worldwide, including 11 million people in Pakistan has grappled with acute malnutrition in year 2023, revealed in a report issued the United Nations (UN). UN in its annual report on malnutrition and food crises spanning 59 countries, disclosed a grim reality that the number of severely malnourished individuals surged by 2.5 million from 2022 to 2023. The World Organization has flagged critical food shortages in Palestine and Sudan, underscoring the severity of the situation.

Pakistan also stands out among the countries scrutinized for food crises, with over 11 million people battling malnutrition in 2023. The report forewarns that food scarcity will exacerbate in various nations in the coming months, with millions more Palestinians and Sudanese expected to endure severe malnutrition by July 2024. In 2023, while 282 million people across 59 countries grappled with severe malnutrition, another 15 million individuals in these countries faced insufficient food.

Punjab female police officer selected for international award

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Police Officer Rafat Bukhari has been selected for the prestigious Excellence in Performance Award by the International Association of Women Police (IAWP). This award is given annually to a female police officer from around the world who has demonstrated exceptional services to her community. SSP Rafat Bukhari, currently serving in the Punjab Safe Cities Authority, has been recognized for her outstanding services in

protecting women, utilizing artificial intelligence to apprehend criminals, and developing intelligent traffic management systems and road safety mechanisms. IAWP President Debra Friedel has congratulated SSP Rafat Bukhari on her selection for this international award. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has also praised SSP Rafat Bukhari's achievement, saying it is a matter of pride for the entire police force, particularly for women officers.

20 Cambodian soldiers killed in ammunition base explosion

PHNOM PENH (AFP/APP): Twenty Cambodian soldiers have been killed in an ammunition explosion at an army base, Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Saturday.

The blast at around 2.45pm (0745 GMT) at the army base in Kampong Speu province to the west of the capital also wounded several soldiers, according to the PM, with the army saying that an entire truck of munitions had exploded. "I am deeply shocked to receive the news of the ammunition explosion incident," Hun Manet said in a statement on Facebook, expressing his "deepest condolences" to the families of those killed. It was not immediately clear what had caused the explosion.

Pictures on social media showed a destroyed one-storey building wreathed in smoke, with residents of a nearby village also sharing images online of broken windows. Other images showed what appeared to be civilians with cuts and gashes being treated in hospital. Munitions accidents are not uncommon in Cambodia, which is awash with ammunition following decades of civil conflict—accidents that are exacerbated by frequently lax safety standards.

Bilawal felicitates people on commemorating 87 years of Sindh Assembly

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended warmest congratulations to the people of Pakistan, especially those in Sindh and their esteemed democratic institutions on the momentous occasion of the Sindh Assembly commemorating 87 years of its parliamentary journey. According to a press release issued from the Media Cell Bilawal House on Saturday, he remarked that the inaugural session of the Sindh Legislative Assembly was convened on April 27, 1937.

He emphasized the enduring legacy of democratic perseverance, noting that even prior to the formation of Pakistan, our forefathers steadfastly championed democratic ideals. Highlighting the pivotal role of Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto in the inception of the first Sindh Assembly, he lamented that a conspiracy deprived him of participation in its maiden session.

Five eyewitnesses in maid Fatima's murder case change their statements

KHAIRPUR (INP): In a twist in the case of death of a nine-year-old maid, Fatima Furro, at a Pir's (spiritual healer) residence in Ranipur area of Khairpur due to torture and rape a few months ago, five eyewitnesses have changed their statements on Saturday. Ujala and Swera, Fatima's cousins, who also worked with her at the Pir's home, and three others namely Sagheer, Muhammad Hassan and Naseem have denied they saw the suspects in the case committing the crime. Following the development, the suspects' lawyer has filed a petition in the court, seeking bail for his clients.

On November 9, 2023, it was reported that the DNA samples of Pir Asad Shah, the prime suspect in the murder case of Fatima, had matched with the semen obtained from the clothes of the victim, who worked at his home. Fatima was found dead under mysterious circumstances on August 14. Later, a post-mortem report confirmed that the minor was also sexually abused. It also confirmed torture with the child.

Punjab's Speedo Bus Service faces shutdown due to financial crisis

LAHORE (INP): In a troubling development for commuters in Lahore, the Speedo Bus Service, initiated by the Punjab Government to provide quality public transport, is on the verge of collapse. Despite its aim to offer economical transportation solutions, the service is grappling with a severe financial crisis, exacerbated by soaring petroleum prices, inflation, and dwindling revenue.

The Department of Transport, responsible for the service's operations, has come under scrutiny for its lack of action to address the mounting challenges. Reports indicate that no concrete action plan has been adopted to keep the Speedo Bus Service operational, with no application made for funds to purchase buses in the upcoming fiscal year.

Contractors involved in running the service have expressed their reluctance to continue operations beyond March 2025, citing unsustainable financial pressures. Of particular concern is the Speedo Bus Service operating on Metro Bus feeder routes, which is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Although the agreement for Speedo Buses on feeder routes remains valid until June 2029, the current financial situation casts doubts on its continuity. Should the Speedo Bus Service be suspended, it would impose a significant burden on the government treasury, necessitating substantial subsidies to alleviate the impact on commuters. Reports suggest that the government would be obligated to pay a staggering amount of 12 billion 960 million 8.6 million in subsidies if the service ceases to operate until 2029.

Babar Azam achieves another T20I milestone

LAHORE (INP) – Pakistan skipper Babar Azam has created another record for most fours in T20I career.

He achieved the milestone while playing against New Zealand in final game of the five-match T20I series on Saturday. Babar hit six 4s and two 6s to make 69 runs in his 107th innings.

With 409 fours in 107 innings, he edged past Ireland player PR Stirling, who smashed 407 fours in 136 innings.

Indian player Virat Kohli stands at third place in the list with 361 fours in 109 innings.

Interior Minister Naqvi orders crackdown against drug peddlers

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has ordered launching of a crackdown against drug peddlers and other criminal gangs in Islamabad on Saturday.

For curbing drug mafia, the Interior Minister has given the Inspector General (IG) of Police Islamabad the task. He said that drug dealers should be brought under the grip of the law through modern technology.

The interior minister said that the sale of other narcotic goods including ice outside the educational institutions will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Interior Minister

Mohsin Naqvi also ordered effective actions against professional beggars in the city. Moreover, Mohsin Naqvi directed to ensure foolproof security of foreign nationals and in this regard it has been decided to establish a special protection force for the security of foreigners.

Special attention should be paid to the security of important places including the red zone, directed Mohsin Naqvi. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also ordered to ensure 100 percent registration of FIRs and delay in registration of FIR is not acceptable. Mohsin Naqvi also ordered to deal with promotion cases of

Islamabad Police immediately as promotions will improve morale of police force. He also directed to complete recruitment process for vacant posts in Islamabad Police. Mohsin Naqvi said we will make the salary of Islamabad police equal to that of Punjab. Mohsin Naqvi also sought a comprehensive plan to solve traffic problems in Islamabad. Islamabad Safe City also has to be equipped with modern requirements, said Interior Minister.

They are improving the condition of police stations in Islamabad, better results will be obtained soon, the Interior Minister said.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting regarding improving Law & order situation and crackdown against criminals in the capital.

Kundi accuses PTI of planning another May 9-like assault

ISLAMABAD (INP) – Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Faisal Karim Kundi launched a diatribe against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Saturday, accusing the political group of planning to stage another May 9-like assault.

Kundi claimed in a press conference here that the PTI was once again indulging in confrontational politics, recalling that its protesting leaders, workers and supporters interrupted into Islamabad without an official permission the other day. Prior to this, the PTI attacked a cement factory in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he added. Kundi advised the PTI to utilise political platforms to engage in dialogue instead of waiting for a missed call from elsewhere – an indirect reference to the GHQ [General Headquarters].

Kundi claimed that many dissenting voices were coming from within the PTI which, according to him, was in a state of confusion and agitation.

Reflecting on the recent by-elections, Kundi said the PTI faced crushing defeat in this electoral exercise carried out on April 21, adding that it had been reduced to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province alone.

About the KP government's concern regarding unavailability of funds from the Centre, Kundi said the province had received funds to the tune of Rs60 billion under the NFC [National Finance Commission] Award.

"Where did this money go? Was it all blown on promoting violence and terrorism," he questioned.

Request for Proposals

Hiring of Firms/Companies/Contractors for:
Solarization of HEC Head Office and its Regional Centres on EPC Basis with O&M (02 Years)
Tender No.: 3(4)/1/2023/Services/Engg/HEC-420

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) invites proposals from eligible firms, licensed by the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in the appropriate category and registered with the Income Tax & GST Departments for the Works, to provide the following contracting services for solarization of HEC Head Office and its Regional Centres as per packages mentioned below:

PACKAGE	SITE	CAPACITY
Package 1	HEC Head Office at Sectors H-9 and H-8 Islamabad	175 KW + 350 KW
Package 2	HEC Lahore Centre	135 KW
Package 3	HEC Karachi Centre	85 KW
Package 4	HEC Peshawar Centre	100 KW

The tender documents for each Package can be downloaded from the HEC/PPRA websites after payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs. 1000/- to be deposited in HEC Account No. 17427900133401 of Habib Bank Limited, SRC Branch, Sector H-9, Islamabad (online or physically). Please note that a separate fee of Rs. 1000/- will have to be deposited, and a separate RFP be used for each Package. The bidder can apply for either or all Packages as desired. The bidder shall purchase separate RFP for each Package as indicated and shall prepare and submit Physical Bids to Engineering Section, Auditorium Block, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, clearly mentioning the Name of Project as well as the Package being applied for, as well as apply to PPRA-EPADS (e-Pak Acquisition and Disposal Systems) for each Package separately as per instructions provided in the bidding document. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security (Package-wise) as specified in the bidding document.

It is mandatory for a bidder to submit bid for each applied for Package to PPRA-EPADS (e-Pak Acquisition and Disposal Systems) as well as submit the physical bid on or before the submission Deadline, i.e., Tuesday, May 28, 2024 in sealed envelopes at 1330 hours. Technical bids will be opened at 1400 hours on the same day at Lecture Hall, Auditorium Block, HEC H-9 Islamabad in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the same address. No bid for any Package will be accepted without evidence of Tender Fee Submission and Earnest Money. Bids for any Package will be rejected if not received in Physical Form before the submission deadline. Furthermore, bids for any Package will be rejected if not applied for on PPRA-EPADS system as well before the submission deadline.

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Higher Education Commission
Auditorium Block, H-9, Islamabad,
Ph.: 051-9040-1526 & -1528 & -1575
PID(I)6513/23

Modi regime trying to mislead world about ground situation by staging election drama in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has said that the BJP-led Hindutva government of India is trying to mislead the international community about the dire situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir by staging parliamentary election drama in the territory.

According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC spokesman Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas said the Modi regime wants to

bolster its normalcy claims through Lok Sabha elections in the occupied territory.

He said India has been maintaining its illegal hold over Kashmir through its military might, highlighting that New Delhi has deployed over 1,100,000 troops in the UN-mandated disputed territory where civilians are treated as enemies with a soldier-to-civilian ratio of 1:10.

He pointed that with such a huge presence of

troops, the occupied territory has become the world's highest militarized zone.

The APHC spokesman while expressing serious concern over the recent attempt by Hindutva goons to desecrate the sanctity of a mosque and a shrine in Tral area of Pulwama said such abhorrent acts were unacceptable to the people of Kashmir and they would resist such moves, tooth and nail.

He said that masjid

and shrines were not only the places of holding big religious gatherings, but the pulpits of these institutions have always represented the people's emotions and their political aspirations.

"It is for this reason that every anti-Kashmir and Hindutva RSS/BJP ruler, at different times in the history, has tried to weaken the centrality of these religious centers of the territory", the spokesman added.



ISLAMABAD: District Judiciary Judges from all over Pakistan presenting a bouquet of flowers to Hon'ble Mr. Justice Athar Minallah in a certificate awarding ceremony at the Federal Judicial Academy.



ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi in a group photo with police officers praising them with commendation certificates to boost their morale.

ECP launches Election Monitoring Center for KP Tehsil Council by-elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has set up the Election Monitoring and Control Center (EMCC) to register and resolve public complaints during the upcoming local government by-elections for the Chairman Tehsil Council scheduled for April 28.

According to the ECP spokesperson, individuals can contact this center to lodge any complaints regarding the elections taking place in six districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The center has en-

listed trained staff to promptly address grievances and ensure timely resolution," stated the spokesperson.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has set up control centers at four levels to register public complaints and swiftly address them. These control rooms are located at provincial, divisional, and district levels, in addition to the Election Commission Secretariat in Islamabad.

The control room will stay in communication with pertinent personnel and

stakeholders. It will remain operational until the conclusion of the electoral process.

He prompted individuals to file their concerns regarding bye-elections with EMCC through email at complaints@ecp.gov.pk, emphasizing the availability of a round-the-clock helpline at 051-111-327-000 for their convenience.

The control center is equipped with monitoring capabilities for both social media and electronic media. Moreover, complaints can be lodged via fax at 051-9204404.

Ambassador Saima presents credentials to Gambian president

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to Senegal, Saima Maymunah Sayed, presented her diplomatic credentials to the President of the Gambia, Adama Barrow.

"Ambassador Saima Sayed will serve as non-resident Ambassador of Pakistan to the Gambia," said a press release received here on Saturday.

During the interaction, she reiterated the brotherly ties between Pakistan and Gambia and conveyed good wishes for the upcoming 15th session of the Islamic Summit Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The presentation of the diplomatic credentials

comes days before Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's scheduled travel to Gambia to attend the OIC Summit being held on May 4-5, 2024, in the Gambian capital of Banjul.

According to the Foreign Office, at the summit, the prime minister would express Pakistan's grave concern about genocide in Gaza, advocate for their right to self-determination, and emphasize the imperative of solidarity, besides deliberating on Islamophobia, terrorism, and the challenges faced by the world, particularly the Muslim world.

He will also hold bilateral meetings with the participating world leaders.

KSrelief distributes 450 food baskets in Shangla

ISLAMABAD (APP): The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) distributed 450 food baskets in Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa here Saturday.

The assistant programme benefiting 3,150 individuals from the neediest and most vulnerable segments affected by the floods as part of the fourth phase of the Food Security Support Program for 2024, the SPA reported.

The aid comes within the relief efforts of the Kingdom through its humanitarian arm, KSrelief, to needy peoples and countries around the world.

IGP Islamabad commends officers for effective duty

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Following the special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, visited and inspected different checkpoints, a public relations officer said.

He said that, IGP Islamabad appreciated the police officers deployed on duty at the checkpoints and summoned them to his office.

The IGP Islamabad

held a meeting with the police officers in his office, praising them with commendation certificates to boost their morale.

On this occasion, the IGP Islamabad said that boosting the morale of police officers dedicated to the service and protection of citizens and fulfilling duties with utmost sincerity is essential. He further stated that the protection of citizens' lives and property is our top priority.

SECP grants license to ever first Study Now Pay Later digital platform

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has granted a NBFC license to M/s Edufi Financial Services (Private) Limited, marking a significant milestone in establishing the first digital platform for Study Now, Pay Later (SNPL) initiatives in Pakistan.

To improve consumer convenience by providing tailored loan solutions, the SECP recognized various digital loan business models that offer innovative lending solutions, said a news release here on Saturday.

The Circular 12 of 2023 was issued with the objective of promoting specific licensing activities within the domain of Investment Finance Services.

The introduction of the Study Now, Pay Later (SNPL) category under digital lending licenses was a pivotal step towards launching digital student loans.

The initiative aims to reduce funding barriers for low-income students by offering financial assistance via digital platforms, thereby reducing their reliance on costly commercial student loans.

Palestine part of Pakistan's DNA; Mushahid tells Istanbul Int'l Conference

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed on Saturday said that Palestine was part of Pakistani DNA whereas Palestinians resistance to brutal occupation was fully justified under international law and the UN Charter.

He was addressing the three-day Istanbul International Conference, inaugurated by President Erdogan and being attended by parliamentarians and political leaders from 80 countries, a news release said on Saturday. Mushahid Hussain, who is member of the 12-member Executive Board of Parliamentarians for Palestine and Al Quds, said the entire people and political

parties of Pakistan support the just cause of Palestine, as Pakistan's policy on Palestine was first enunciated by the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, even before the independence of Pakistan".

Condemning the Gaza conflict, Mushahid termed it the "first live televised genocide in modern history", adding that "both Muslim regimes and West countries have let down the Palestinians, except for public opinion in Muslim and Western countries".

Giving Pakistan's track record of supporting Palestine, Mushahid Hussain referred to Pakistan being the only non-

Arab country to take part in two Arab-Israeli Wars in 1967 and 1973, plus first recognition of PLO under Yasser Arafat took place at the Lahore Islamic Summit in 1974.

Mushahid urged an immediate ceasefire and steps to establish an independent Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. The Pakistan Parliamentary Delegation attending the conference includes Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, MNAs Sheryar Meher, Chaudhry Shahbaz and Junaid Akbar. The Pakistani delegates also met President Erdogan and Speaker of Turkish Parliament, Dr Noman Kurtulmus.

Pak HC in Australia attends funeral prayer of Faraz Tahir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri has attended the funeral of Faraz Ahmed Tahir, a victim of Bondi Junction incident. The funeral ceremony was attended by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, NSW Premier, MPs, Senators, and a large number of community members.

IIOJK HC quashes illegal detention of banned JeI leader Adv Zahid Ali

ISLAMABAD (APP): The High Court of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir has quashed the fourth detention order in a row from 2019 to March 2024.

"The latest preventive detention of the petitioner is compounding the illegality, attending the breach and violation of the petitioner's fundamental right to personal liberty with impunity, and that entitles him to compensation," the judgment stated.

While the petitioner Advocate Zahid Ali had sought a compensation of Rs 25 lac, the court directed the occupation authorities to pay Rs 5 lac. This is the first time the court has penalised the authorities for detention under the PSA.

The order said that the court had quashed the three previous detentions of the petitioner not on technical grounds but on the merits of the case.

Justice Rahul Bharti in his judgment said, "This court cannot resist but to hold that the preventive detention of the petitioner is mala fide and illegal". He added, "The petitioner has been made to suffer a loss of his liberty for a cumulative period of more than 1,080 days of preventive custody, covered under the span of four detention orders in a row from 2019 to March 2024."



ISLAMABAD: A view of Pakistan Monument of the Federal Capital after rain.

PTDC organizes webinar to promote medical tourism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) here on Saturday organized a webinar on promotion of Medical Tourism in Pakistan.

Managing Director PTDC Aftab ur Rehman Rana moderated this webinar, said a press release.

In his opening remarks, Aftab Rana welcomed all the participants and introduced Dr Mubbashir Iftikhar who is a highly respected figure in the medical tourism industry in Malaysia and has played a pivotal role in laying the initial groundwork for the promotion of medical tourism in Malaysia.

His active participation in shaping Malaysia's prominence on the global medical tourism stage has greatly been acknowledged.

Later on, Dr Mubbashir Iftikhar gave a detailed presentation on the topic and presented a roadmap to bring Pakistan on the global map of medical tourism. In the discussion all the participants shared their views and ask various questions to gain further clarity from Dr Mubbashir on various strategies which can be useful to develop the segment of medical tourism in Pakistan.

PPP prioritizes dialogue over hatred: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan People Party (PPP) senior leader Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday said that the PPP always prioritizes resolving issues through political dialogue.

Speaking to a private news channel, he urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to engage in discussions with political leaders.

Expressing concern over contradictions in PTI leaders' statements, Kundi pointed out internal conflicts within PTI.

Recalling PTI's protest during the visit of the Chinese president, he said that PTI's approach seems to be centred on politics of hatred.

DIG Operations says: Securing the life and property of citizens is utmost priority

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari has categorically directed all police officials to maintain high vigilance in the city to eradicate crimes and ensure an effective crackdown against criminals, a public relations officer said.

He said that, DIG Operations Islamabad chaired an important meeting regarding crime prevention. The meeting was attended by SSP Investigation, SP investigation, All Zonal SPs, DSPs, in charge ARDU, in charge AVLU.

DIG Operations is-

India continuously violating Intl laws, conventions in IIOJK: Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): India is continuously violating all international laws and conventions in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to a report released by Kashmir Media Service on Saturday, the Modi regime revoked special status of occupied Jammu and Kashmir in flagrant violation of international laws.

It said India is settling non-Kashmiris in the occupied territory against resolutions of the United Nations, adding the Bharatiya Janata Party regime is plotting to deprive Kashmiris of their identity.

The report said India is preventing Kashmiris from exercising their universally-recognized right to self-determination.

sued instructions to further improve the performance of all officers. He said that challans of the cases under investigation should be sent to the courts, while the criminal gangs, absconder involved in murder, kidnapping and rape cases, professional beggars should be arrested as soon as possible.

He further directed all officers to arrest offenders involved in heinous crimes, especially those involved in murder and robbery cases and increase the ratio of challan of cases and recoveries.

JKLF pays tributes to its leader Amanullah Khan on his death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front has paid tribute to its leader late Amanullah Khan on his eighth death anniversary.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the JKLF in this regard organized various events in Srinagar, Kotli, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, Rawalkot, Bagh, Tatta Pani, Abbaspur and Karachi in addition to America, UK and Europe.

The JKLF spokes-

man in a statement in Srinagar said that the participants of the event expressed their determination to continue the struggle in accordance with the guiding principles of the Quaid-e-Tehreek Amanullah Khan. He said the anniversary was observed yesterday with devotion and respect all over the territory and apart from Srinagar, various events were held in Azad Kashmir, Kotli, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot.

Chilam Josh festival to commence from May 13

ISLAMABAD (APP): The four-day Chilam Josh festival will be held in three Kalash valleys, including Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur from May 13 to 17 to entertain the tourists from various parts of the country.

The annual festival comprises traditional events including dances of Kalash girls and boys to the beats of traditional drums and will be attended by a large number of tourists, including foreigners from all over the world, said a news release issued here Saturday.

The Chilam Josh festival will start with "Milkday," in which Kalash people offer libations of milk that had been saved for 10 days prior to the occa-

sion. The celebrations will highlight their rich cultural, plethora of colors and the underlying message of happiness.

During the festival, the Kalash people will seek the blessings of their God and pray for the safety of their herds and crops of the community.

Women usually dress up in traditional clothes of vibrant colors gold and silver jewelry, and elaborate headgear, while men wear traditional shalwar kameez with a woolen waistcoat. Kalash women and men dance and sing in a circle to the rhythmic chant of drum beats.

Kalashi festivals are famous throughout the world and celebrated in different months of the year.

The Chilam Josh festival starts at Rumbur valley and then festivities extend to other valleys of Kalash. People pray for the protection of their fields and animals before going to their fields and for this purpose, they usually spread milk on their Gods.

On the first day, the Z'oshi/Zosh ceremony takes place, where boys and girls go to the higher pastures to pluck wildflowers and walnut leaves to the beat of drums.

On second day, C'irik pi pi (Milk drinking and distribution day) is held, in which goat stables are decorated with wildflowers and walnut leaves, singing rituals, and ceremonies take place in every village.



ISLAMABAD: Motorists on their way at Murree road during rain in the city.

Drug prevention
ISLAMABAD: Following the special directives of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the 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 Islamabad Police officers are also conducting a special awareness campaign regarding the dangers of narcotics and measures for prevention and control.

The use of narcotics, especially by students, is

detrimental to their health and future. Addiction not only affects individuals but also leads to the destruction of entire families and societies. Addiction is a disease that not only ruins the lives of hundreds of young people but also subjects them to various hardships.

Youngsters should protect themselves from this scourge and play their part in protecting others in their surroundings from the menace of narcotics. Educational institutions should also organize awareness campaigns against narcotics through seminars and workshops.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Sunday April 28, 2024

Missing links

The deplorable practice of enforced disappearances is an affront to due process and the rule of law. Pakistan has struggled for decades to root out this evil, with various dispensations promising to recover the 'missing'.

These efforts have met with varying degrees of success, but the fact is that people continue to 'disappear' in the country. Civil society and the courts, as well as the relatives of the missing, have maintained pressure on the state to trace disappeared individuals and to abide by the law when detaining suspects.

The current administration has, like those before it, promised to look into the issue. The federal law minister told a media briefing recently that the Islamabad High Court-mandated committee probing enforced disappearances was being reformed. He observed that though the issue could not be solved "overnight", the reconstituted body would have a "parliamentary presence".

While it is welcome that the government appears to be serious about the issue of missing persons, it should be remembered that this is at least the third official body probing the problem. Aside from the aforementioned committee, the Supreme Court had formed in 2011 a Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, while upon the provincial high court's orders, Balochistan's administration had constituted a similar body in 2022.

It would not be wrong to say that numerous commissions or committees will not end the practice, though these bodies may be important. Instead, what is required is the will of the state to ensure that all individuals picked up by security agencies are done so as per the law, their families are informed of their detention, and they have access to counsel to defend themselves in court.

Perhaps the government's move to include parliamentary oversight of the committee could bring more transparency and ensure that those within the state machinery responsible for illegal detentions are held accountable. The state will have to pursue this issue with determination and empathy, and pledge to reform its practices so that they are in consonance with constitutional demands, and the requirements of due process.

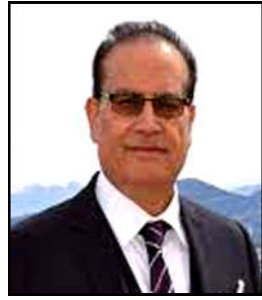
Sadly, in the past, certain state functionaries, among them those occupying the highest offices in the land, have belittled the issue, making controversial claims that many people 'disappear' on their own. Such a condescending attitude will not help end this practice. According to the Supreme Court-mandated commission, 23pc of cases are still pending.

The state's job should be to solve all the remaining cases, and make sure that no more are added to the list of the missing. Pakistan can very much battle insurgency, terrorism and crime using the tools available within the law. As the past decades have shown, the country has not been made more secure by 'disappearing' people suspected of wrongdoing.

"US country report: A true reflection, or..."

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



Pakistan's Foreign Affairs promptly rejected the US Department of State's 120-page "2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan" without acknowledging its comprehensive compilation process where the source of almost all necessary data rests in Pakistan. The compilation involves gathering data from embassy and consulate reports, local NGOs, media coverage, government agencies, international organizations, academic institutions, testimonies, diplomatic channels, official government reports, and open-source intelligence. The report aims to provide a thorough and accurate assessment of human rights conditions in Pakistan indicating a failure to address shortcomings.

Rather than addressing issues and implementing reforms, Pakistan tends to respond with generic statements disconnected from reality which is short-sighted, as baseless rejection only draws more attention to the report's contents, prompting further

scrutiny. Pakistan's tendency to ignore issues and reject criticism perpetuates poor human rights practices rather than fostering improvement.

"There is nothing in the report that has not been discussed almost on a daily basis by our courts, political parties, civil society, and both traditional and social media. Our media and civil society, day in and day out, in their reports, comments, and analyses, discuss, refer to, and quote, rightly or wrongly, all those issues, matters, and incidents which were referred to in the report. These include unlawful or arbitrary detentions and killings, including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearances; torture; and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government or non state actors."

"They discuss harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; political prisoners; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; punishment of family members for alleged offenses by a relative; and serious abuses in conflict, including reportedly unlawful civilian deaths and enforced disappearances.

The elite journalists and opposition political parties have raised concerns about significant restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom. These include violence against journalists, unjustified arrests, and dis-

appearances of journalists, as well as censorship and serious constraints on internet freedom. Additionally, there are substantial interferences with the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including overly restrictive laws governing the operation of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups.

The media and civil society have been vocal about issues such as restrictions on religious freedom, coerced or forced returns of individuals to countries where they may face torture or persecution, government corruption, and government restrictions on both domestic and international human rights organizations. They have also highlighted extensive gender-based violence, including domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and child and early forced marriage.

Media reports also suggest physical abuse of criminal suspects in custody, leading to injuries or deaths. Besides, lengthy trial delays at both the commencement and conclusion of trials, along with the failure to adequately investigate, discipline, and prosecute those responsible for killings, have contributed to a culture of impunity.

Our media is full of reports that there is a significant increase in attacks against police and security forces. According to the independent think tank Cen-

ter for Research and Security Studies, there were at least 386 reported deaths of police and military personnel in terrorist attacks and counterterrorism operations during the first three quarters of the year. The number of attacks and casualties were higher than in 2022 or 2021.

However, they may not realize that these commentaries and analyses are being recorded, compiled, and reported upon by human rights watchdogs around the world, including those in the US reflecting negatively on our human rights record."

The impugned report comprehensively cataloged a multitude of incidents, events, and statements with detailed dates, names, and qualifications forming its foundation. Noteworthy examples include the killing of seven Shia Muslims, including four teachers, in Upper Kurram.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on May 4, apparently in retaliation for the earlier killing of a Sunni Muslim; a suicide bombing in Mastung, Balochistan, on September 29, which claimed the lives of at least 60 individuals during a religious procession; and an attack by Tehreek-e-Jihad on Pakistan Air Force Training Base M.M. Alam in Mianwali, Punjab, resulting in the deaths of nine militant attacks on November 4.

Ironically, instead of addressing these issues,

there was a tendency to blame rating agencies for using inaccurate data, ignoring the fact that much of the data originates from within our own country, often from government sources.

During my tenure as Joint Secretary, I compiled a comprehensive report on all international ratings, rankings, and indexes, revealing a dismal picture of our nation's neglect, lethargy, aimless governance, and widespread lawlessness. It underscored the multitude of challenges we faced, including multiple power centers, injustice, economic stagnation, and social degradation.

Surprisingly, the government at that time took my report seriously. It was shared with the Prime Minister and other key government figures, who instructed me to develop a robust plan of action to improve our international ratings and rankings. I diligently crafted such a plan, which was subsequently shared with the higher echelons of the government. The national security advisor was entrusted with leading the implementation of this plan, and I was tasked with briefing him on the report and the proposed strategy.

However, as fate would have it, the government was dissolved before any significant progress could be made. Sadly, this scenario mirrored the fate of similar plans throughout Pakistan's history—prom-

ising initiatives often succumbing to the tide of political change, leaving crucial reforms languishing on the shelf.

It is imperative that reports by the US statement department and such other reports reflecting our national performance and responsibilities are thoroughly reviewed and referred to relevant committees of the National Assembly and Senate for in-depth analysis. These committees should scrutinize the reports meticulously, identifying any inaccuracies in the data and bringing them to the attention of the rating agencies for clarification or amendment.

Furthermore, these committees should establish robust collaboration with the focal persons of rating agencies in Pakistan, providing them with accurate and reliable data to ensure the integrity of subsequent reports. If the data and analysis in the report are found to be accurate, the committees should then formulate a comprehensive plan of action to address the shortcomings highlighted.

Rather than blaming the mirror, we must have the courage to acknowledge the reflections it presents and strive to ensure that what the mirror reflects is indeed a true representation of our nation's beauty and charm. This approach fosters accountability and facilitates proactive measures to enhance our national performance and reputation.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq: A unifying figure in Pakistani politics and diplomacy



By Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

In the labyrinthine world of Pakistani politics, finding a leader who commands respect and admiration across party lines is a rare feat. Yet, amidst the turbulence of partisan divides, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq emerges as a figure of unity and statesmanship, revered not only within the National Assembly but also among the diplomatic community. As he embarks on his third term as

Speaker of the National Assembly, his popularity continues to soar, transcending political allegiances and earning accolades from both the treasury and opposition benches, as well as the diplomatic corps.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's journey to becoming the Speaker is a testament to his unwavering commitment to public service and his ability to navigate the intricate dynamics of Pakistani politics with finesse and integrity. His tenure as Speaker during previous assemblies has left an indelible mark, characterized by fairness, impartiality, and a resolute dedication to upholding democratic principles.

One of the foremost reasons behind Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's popularity

is his remarkable ability to foster consensus and dialogue across ideological divides. In a polarized political landscape, he serves as a unifying force, transcending party lines to prioritize the national interest above all else. His inclusive leadership style encourages constructive engagement and cooperation, facilitating the formulation of bipartisan solutions to the myriad challenges facing Pakistan.

Moreover, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's diplomatic acumen and statesmanship have garnered widespread admiration both domestically and internationally. As Speaker of the National Assembly, he serves as the face of Pakistan's parliamentary democ-

racy on the global stage, engaging with foreign dignitaries and representing the country's interests with eloquence and dignity. His adept handling of diplomatic affairs has enhanced Pakistan's standing in the international community, earning praise from diplomats and foreign leaders alike.

Furthermore, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's personal integrity and ethical conduct have earned him respect and admiration from colleagues and constituents as well. His unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability sets a benchmark for public officials, instilling confidence in the democratic process and strengthening public

trust in government institutions. His leadership by example serves as a guiding light for all those who aspire to serve the nation with honor and integrity.

Additionally, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's dedication to parliamentary decorum and dignity has earned him admiration within the National Assembly and beyond. He presides over sessions with grace and composure, ensuring that debates are conducted in a civilized manner befitting the esteemed institution of the National Assembly. His unwavering commitment to upholding parliamentary traditions reflects his reverence for the democratic process and his respect for the sanctity of the legislative

body. In conclusion, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's popularity across the treasury and opposition benches, as well as within the diplomatic community, is a testament to his exemplary leadership, diplomatic finesse, and unwavering commitment to democratic principles. In a world fraught with division and discord, he stands as a beacon of unity and statesmanship, bridging divides and fostering a spirit of cooperation both at home and abroad. As Pakistan navigates the challenges of the 21st century, leaders like Sardar Ayaz Sadiq serve as pillars of stability and guardians of democracy, ensuring that the voice of the people is heard and respected on the global stage.

Censorship and disinformation

Asad Baig

Digital disinformation has emerged as a formidable threat in the digital era, warping public perceptions and jeopardising fundamental democratic structures. It undermines the integrity of informed public discourse and governance, posing critical challenges to the foundational principles of truth and transparency in our interconnected societies. A subtler yet profoundly impactful fall-out of digital disinformation is its utility as a tool for higher content-control, cloaking overt censorship under the guise of 'protecting citizens from online harms'.

This pretext of safeguarding the public, or curtailing the spread of false information 'in the public interest', often serves as a convenient facade for targeted bans, or even blanket censorship, by both governments and social media companies. Paradoxically, censorship itself often acts as a significant catalyst for the proliferation of digital disinformation, particularly the kind that can distort democratic processes and shape public opinion. This form of control enables dominant narratives to flourish unchallenged, simultaneously silencing dissenting voices and

alternative perspectives, thus skewing public perception and undermining the very essence of democratic dialogue.

A case study illustrating the impact of digital censorship on the spread of disinformation is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict has been plagued by significant misinformation, disseminated through various channels such as misleading narratives, out-of-context imagery, and false claims across multiple platforms. Human Rights Watch has documented instances where posts advocating for Palestinian rights were either hidden or received notably diminished engagement on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. This practice, often termed 'shadow banning', effectively limits the visibility of pro-Palestinian voices. In my view, this silencing of pro-Palestinian voices has substantially contributed to the spread of disinformation. These actions can distort public discourse and affect how people perceive a certain conflict, potentially influencing public opinion and international policy decisions based on incomplete or biased information.

In recent months, Pakistan's decision to suspend the social media platform X has spotlighted a critical issue: while intended to curb disinformation, such measures can paradoxically foster an environment where misinformation thrives more freely. This development offers a poignant example of how censorship, rather than containing disinformation, might actually exacerbate it.

Social media platforms like X play a crucial role in the modern public sphere. They enable the rapid dissemination of information, facilitate public engagement, and allow for the communal vetting of facts and ideas. This interactive ecosystem is pivotal in debunking falsehoods and fostering informed communities. When access to such platforms is restricted, it disrupts these processes, removing a public tool for fact verification and debate. Consequently, misinformation can migrate to less regulated and more opaque channels, such as public and private WhatsApp groups, spreading without the counterbalance of community scrutiny or expert fact-checking.

Journalistic fact-checking outlets, or even individual, credible journalists who regularly debunk misinformation, serve as the critical first line of defence against digital

disinformation, rigorously scrutinising and debunking false narratives that permeate online spaces. They are essential in the fight against digital disinformation, considering the broad reach and real-time nature of social media platforms. They use these platforms not just to debunk false claims but also to educate the public on recognising and questioning misinformation. The suspension of X in Pakistan has significantly handicapped these efforts.

The handling of the X platform blockage by regulatory bodies and the federal government serves as a stark reminder of how misinformation is often manipulated for political ends. The sudden and unexplained blocking of the platform left both the public and the media in a state of confusion, as the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority remained tight-lipped and evasive in its communications. Even when the ban faced legal challenges in the Sindh High Court, a PTA representative confidently asserted that the platform was operational, going as far as to demonstrate its functionality on his mobile phone. It was only after sustained legal pressure that the PTA reluctantly submitted a document to

the Sindh High Court, revealing a letter from the interior ministry directing the blockage of X. However, the credibility of this document is marred by discrepancies in dates and other key details.

Legal battles over the X ban are ongoing in the high courts with the interior ministry stubbornly citing online harms as the primary justification for the ban. In a report submitted to the Islamabad High Court on April 17, the interior ministry attempted to link the ban to the "misuse of the platform", claiming it was essential for upholding security, "maintaining public order, and preserving the integrity of our nation". The report further accused X of being a potential catalyst for "chaos and instability" and condemned its failure to address "defamatory campaigns".

These allegations, however, overlook a critical aspect of digital and social media platforms; while they can indeed be used to spread disinformation, they also serve as crucial tools for countering and responding to such campaigns, and countering harmful disinformation.

By cutting off mainstream access to X, the government has inadvertently created an environment where

misinformation can thrive unopposed, particularly in less public spaces like WhatsApp groups. This restriction severely hampers the ability of fact-checkers to reach and correct public misconceptions, allowing disinformation to spread unchecked and unchallenged.

To effectively combat disinformation without resorting to heavy-handed censorship, governments should consider alternative strategies that focus on transparency, public education, and collaboration with technology platforms governed by principles of human rights, transparency and multistakeholderism. Enhancing media literacy among the populace—or 'inoculating' them against disinformation—can empower individuals to critically analyse and question the information they encounter.

Through such collaborations, governments can develop more nuanced strategies that address disinformation while respecting freedom of expression.

Inversely, when official channels suppress communication, people may turn to less credible sources, potentially increasing their exposure to disinformation.

CM Murad launches immunization campaign in 25 districts of Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that eradication of polio was a collective responsibility, therefore district administration, local bodies, civil society members and our partners must work together to save our children from the crippling disease of polio. "We are launching a week-long National Immunization Campaign from Monday, 29th April in 25 districts, therefore all the deputy commissioners

and SSPs must ensure its success by supporting the polio teams in administering Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) to children below 5-years of age." This he said while presiding over a meeting of the Provincial Task Force for Eradication of Polio here at CM House on Saturday. The meeting was attended by Minister Health Dr Azra Pechuho, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon,

IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Secretary School Education Zahid Abbasi, Adl IG Karachi Imran Yakoob, Secretary Health Rehman Baloch, EOC Coordinator Irshad Sodhar, DG Health Dr Waqar, Chairman Rotary Aziz Memon, Ms Melissa of Unicef, Dr Zain of WHO and other concerned. The Divisional Commissioner, DIGs of Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Shaheed Benazirabad,

Sukkur and Larkana participated in the meeting through video link. The chief minister said that polio had been eradicated from the entire region, except for Afghanistan and Pakistan, both of which have two cases each. He explained that due to frequent inter-provincial population movements and even from Afghanistan, the country was struggling to eradicate the polio virus. Minister Health Dr. Azra Pechuho, informed the CM.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman in a group photo with high level Educational delegation of UK led by Prof. Sir Steve Smith.

Education promotion among top priorities of government: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Saturday said that promotion of education is among top most priorities of government and steps have been taken to educate each and every child of the province.

He was the Chief Guest in annual prize distribution of Inspires International School System. The governor appreciated the role of private education institution to promote education and said that children are our future and teachers and parents should realize their responsibilities to groom children.

He said that basic

education is the right of each and every child and the collective efforts of private and public sector institution would materialize the dream of hundred percent educated societies. KP Governor said children should also be informed about significance of our moral and ethical values and taught skills that are needed to lead a happy and successful life.

He said that teachers should educate children following the golden principles of Islam that are core foundation of an Islamic society.

Later, he visited various stalls and distributed prizes among outstanding students of the school.

CM Punjab directs for Integrated Health System in Murree, Galiyat

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif paid a visit to Samli Syed Muhammad Hussain Government TB Sanatorium Hospital and inspected various departments including OPD and general wards here on Saturday.

The chief minister gave certain directives to the administration to equip the hospital with modern technology and enhanced medical facilities. She directed to establish an integrated health system in the whole area including Murree, Galiyat.

The chief minister asked for setting up a helipad and an airstrip to

shift patients from the hilly areas in case of an emergency. While directing to fully functional the mother-child block immediately, she underlined the need to undertake prompt measures for the appointment of doctors, staff along with establishing their residential blocks. The CM further directed to establish general wards in the Samli Hospital and to set up the latest cardiac block. An Oncology Unit will also be established for the cancer treatment in Syed Muhammad Hussain Government TB Sanatorium Hospital, she said while directing to

establish more wards including general medical wards, surgery, urology, orthopedic, eye and ENT wards will be established. The chief minister also ordered to run hospital transport immediately in order to shift the patients to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital and Samli Hospital in Murree. The CM while visiting indoor patients, directed to undertake prompt measures for the treatment of a brother of a woman in the OPD and to take helicopter services if required for shifting of patient to other hospital. She also visited the TB ward and inquired after each patient about treatment facilities.



FAISALABAD: Provincial Minister for Education Rana Sikandar Hayat and Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora talking to media person during their visit to Government Pakistan Model High School Rail Bazar.

Govt striving to provide equal education chances for all: Rana Sikandar

FAISALABAD (APP): Provincial Minister for Education Rana Sikandar Hayat has said the government is striving to provide equal educational opportunities to all communities living in the country.

Talking to the media during his visit to Government Pakistan Model High School here on Saturday, he said Pakistan was a peaceful country where followers of all religions were respected. He said the government had set its priority to establish such a model school where students of all communities including Muslims and Sikh could get education easily so that inter-faith harmony and tolerance could be promoted in the country. He said that the schools were facing acute shortage of teachers as no teacher was recruited for the last six years. However, now the government would overcome this shortage on

priority basis, he added. He said that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz was working under a vision of "Literate Punjab" and in this connection no mafia would be allowed to interfere in the education system.

He said that encroachments in all government schools would be removed immediately to transform them into model educational institutions across the province.

He said that solid steps would be taken to eliminate harassment incidents in the schools. In this regard, complaint cell and portal would be established to take prompt action on receipt of harassment complaints especially against female teachers. He said that government was also taking immediate steps to provide books on urgent basis whereas booty mafia would be dealt with an iron hand on war-footing so that intelligent students.

3 killed, 3 injured in road accidents

FAISALABAD (APP): Three people including a girl were killed while 3 others sustained multiple injuries in different road accidents in the last 12 hours.

A Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Saturday that a speeding motorcycle collided with a donkey cart coming from the opposite direction due to darkness on Friday night.

As a result, motorcyclist Nadeem Asghar, 40, of Chak No.274-JB Sarhala and his 5-year-old daughter Aasia Nadeem received serious injuries and died on the spot whereas his father, Asghar Bashir (70), received minor injuries.

Similarly, 70-year-old Altaf Hussain of Aminpur Bungalow was killed after receiving serious injuries when the brakes of a vehicle driven by his son failed and it hit him on Narwala Road.

Meanwhile, a speeding truck hit a rickshaw near the Kashmir Bridge Underpass on Canal Road. As a result, three passengers including Asif, 28, of Kot Abdul Malik, Shahid Bashir, 24, of Chak No. 215-RB and Abdul Razaq, 35, of Mannanwala received injuries and Rescue 1122 shifted them to Allied Hospital-II (DHQ Hospital) after first aid, he added.

Young maid burnt to death

LAHORE (APP): A 10-year-old maid was fatally burnt under mysterious circumstances in the Millat Park area here on Saturday. Police said Zainab, who belonged to Pattoki and worked at the house of Suleman, was burnt but had been not shifted to hospital for nine hours. They said that her father, Ramazan, was informed that she had suffered burns but he found her dead in hospital.

Police have arrested the house owner who claimed that the girl had died after suffering burns in a cylinder explosion. Suleman said the girl was administered first aid at home and was taken to General Hospital when her condition deteriorated. The doctors said the girl had been brought dead.

Police said the girl had been tortured to death and her body was torched to conceal the crime.

Minister emphasized the government's commitment toward transparency

KARACHI: MPA Mumtaz Jakhriani meeting with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru paid a visit to the Azakhel wheat godown in Nowshetra, the other day.

The minister was accompanied by Secretary Food Zarif ul Muani along with other officials concerned.

The minister was briefed about the process of procurement of wheat and the measures taken for its safe storage in the warehouse.

During the visit, Zahir Shah Toru stated that the provincial cabinet had decided to purchase local wheat, aiming not only to procure quality wheat but also yielding significant financial benefits to the province.

He revealed that the provincial cabinet had approved the purchase of 600,000 metric tons of wheat for the year, setting the rate at 3,900 rupees per 40 kilograms, aligned with federal, Punjab and Balochistan government rates.

Regarding the welfare of local growers, Shah assured that their interests would be safeguarded at all costs. The minister emphasized the government's commitment toward transparency, highlighting ongoing efforts to digitize the administrative affairs of the food department to ensure accountability.

Zahir Shah Toru extended that five-member committee has also been constituted.

Zahid Khan urges to address climate change impact in KP

Independent Report MANSEHRA: In the wake of a tragic incident of lightning strikes in Mansehra, Zahid Khan Zeb, the Adviser for Tourism and Culture to the KP CM has extended heartfelt condolences to the affected families while highlighting the province's vulnerability to terrorism and climate change.

Expressing sympathy for the victims, Zeb emphasized that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, already grappling with the aftermath of terrorism, is now facing increasing challenges from climate change, evident in the rising incidents of thunderstorms and lightning strikes.

He pointed out the discrepancy in representation at national and international forums on climate change, warning that neglecting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's interests could have detrimental effects on federal rights and lead to significant damage.

Calling for immediate action, the Adviser urged the federal government to allocate more resources to the province to address the dual challenges of terrorism and climate change.

He emphasized the importance of giving Khyber Pakhtunkhwa a leadership role in national policies on climate change and carbon credits, citing the province.

Man kills brother killed over minor dispute

FAISALABAD (APP): An infuriated youth shot dead his brother over a minor dispute in the area of Sadar police station.

A Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Saturday that Akram of Hasan Pura quarrelled with his brother, Umair, over a minor dispute and opened fire at him near Dhuddiwal.

As a result, Umair, 22, received serious injuries and died on the spot while the accused fled.

Rescue 1122 shifted the body to mortuary of Allied Hospital-II (DHQ Hospital) for postmortem while the area police started an investigation.

Transport minister says: Construction of parking plazas in Murree soon

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Transport Bilal Akbar Khan said that parking plazas would be constructed soon to curb traffic and parking issues in Murree.

Punjab government will take all possible measures for tourist facilities.

He expressed these views while talking to the media during his visit to Murree on Saturday.

The minister visited the Murree on the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif as a follow-up to 'Murree expansion plan'.

The minister examined the proposed sites for parking and discussed possibilities and opportunities for the construction of parking plazas.

He also visited Murree's General Bus Stand and exchanged views with transporters on prevailing traffic issues and possible solutions. In his media interaction, the minister informed that the rush would be reduced after the placement of the parking lot. The Punjab government will take all possible measures to facilitate tourists along with providing quality travel facilities in Murree.



GILGIT: Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmad Mirza and other people participate in a vibrant awareness walk aimed at promoting the importance of cleanliness walk organized by Provincial Hospital Administration (PHQ).

Two killed over land dispute

SARGODHA (APP): Two people were killed over a land dispute in the jurisdiction of Mosa Khail police station, here on Saturday.

According to a spokesperson, the two identified as Aslam Hiraj and Naem Hiraj were fighting over some land disputes, due to which firing sprees between two groups started.

Station House Officers(SHO) of concern police station reached on the spot, taking the bodies of the victims into the custody.

Further investigation was underway.

US diplomats take part in cricketing activity at Kinnaird College ground

LAHORE (APP): The US diplomats immersed themselves into the colours of cricket as they participated in a fun cricket game at the Kinnaird College for Women University (KCWU) cricket grounds, here on Saturday.

The US diplomats from all parts of the country including deputy chief of mission (DCM), US embassy in Islamabad, Andrew Schofer, played cricket with young women cricketers from southern Punjab and honed their cricketing skills.

Embracing spirit of the upcoming ICC's mega event in the USA from June 2, US Consul General to Lahore Kristin Hawkins, Consul General to Karachi Conrad Tribble, Consul General to Peshawar Shante Moore and other diplomatic staff were clad in green outfits and took part in fun cricket activity against Ali Khan Tareen's team from the south Punjab.

The Kinnaird College cricket ground wore a festive look as the US diplomats took the field.

They showed keen interest in the game of cricket and, sometimes, were seen asking questions from the young women cricketers and Ali Khan Tareen.

DCM Schofer and CG Kristin Hawkins opened the innings after the south Punjab women cricketers asked the US diplomats to bat first. Schofer and Ms Hawkins batted cautiously and, at times, took batting tips from Ali Khan Tareen during their innings, but CG Conrad Tribble impressed the opposition and the spectators with his free-flowing innings. He hit all across the field and was the only one to put the south Punjab women bowlers to test.

Talking to APP about his power hitting, Conrad Tribble said he had played baseball during his high school and those skills had enabled him to do well in batting. He said there were many similarities in cricket and baseball and the US had rich traditions in baseball. Conrad Tribble's words were proved true a while later when he was seen throwing the ball.



ABBOTTABAD: Local man gathering the remains of a soil hut situated in the village Dheri, after fire eruption, due to short circuit.

CM KP condoles death of three persons in lightning in Mansehra

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Saturday condoled the death of three people who have died due to lightning in Mansehra and expressed grief over the tragic incident.

In a message of condolence, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolences with the bereaved families.

The chief minister shares the grief of the affected families. The provincial government will provide all possible support to the affected families, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur said.

It is worth mentioning here that in a tragic incident, three people including two brothers were killed due to lightning strike in forests in Mansehra. According to the initial report given by the officials of the Rescue 1122, the tragic incident happened in the forests where shepherds, a child among them, were herding their cattle.

As lightning struck,

Ahmed, Shakeel, and Shafiq lost their lives while child Sadeer suffered injuries.

Adding to the sorrow, numerous cattle succumbed to the deadly force of nature's electrical discharge. Giving further detail, the lightning struck three individuals, including two siblings, in the forests of Kundaw Kari in Oghi tehsil of Mansehra district late Friday night.

According to locals, all three shepherds, accompanied by their herds and sheep, were fatally struck by lightning. The sudden lightning, followed by heavy rainfall, alarmed the residents, prompting them to rush to the forest where the victims were found.

Amir Khadim, an official from Rescue 1122, stated, "Our teams promptly responded to the incident after receiving the alert and transported the deceased to a hospital in Oghi." The bodies were later taken to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, Oghi. The deceased were identified as Mohammad Shafique, 28.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali addressing as chief guest in the Annual Function of Inspire Int. School System.

Turkmenistan to complete TAPI energy project with regional countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Turkmenistan is committed to complete the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) energy project together with the regional countries. Muhammadmyrat Amanov, CEO of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited on Thursday said that Turkmenistan has advanced on Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline, an energy project with strong commitment according to the International Law, said a press release issued here. "Turkmenistan is making significant progress on the TAPI natural gas pipeline, which aims to supply 33 billion cubic meters annually to South Asia" he said. Speaking at the Turkmen Energy Investment Forum (TEIF 2024) currently being held in Paris, Muhammadmyrat Amanov of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited highlighted that the Turkmenistan section of the pipeline is complete and the ongoing discussions to advance the project beyond Turkmenistan are in strict alignment with international standards. He said the project emphasizes environmental sustainability by leveraging natural gas to reduce emissions significantly compared to coal and oil, thereby tackling indoor pollution and enhancing regional air quality. Importantly, Turkmenistan is implementing the project in strict adherence to international law, Mr. Amanov emphasized. "In light of the ongoing Project

developments, Turkmenistan remains committed to upholding international law, fulfilling its obligations, and adhering to international norms and regulations." This approach reaffirms Turkmenistan's dedication to global cooperation and legal integrity in executing the TAPI project. Looking ahead, the project's focus is shifting to the Herat Offtake Strategy in Afghanistan, which will play a critical role in environmental protection by reducing air pollution.



QUETTA: President Anjuman-e-Tajiran Balochistan Abdul Rahim Kakar, Ameer Jan Agha, Hazrat Ali Achakzai, Mir Yaseen Mengal, Kaleemullah Kakar, Saadullah Achakzai and others addressing a Press Conference at Quetta Press Club.



FAISALABAD: A group photo of Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Pakistan poised to become South Asian region's tech hub: Masood Khan

WASHINGTON (APP): Pakistan is set to become a tech hub in the South Asian region, Ambassador Masood Khan told a group of over thirty chief executive officers (CEOs) and founders of leading tech startup companies owned by Pakistani-Americans on Friday. "The tech industry of Pakistan has witnessed exponential growth during the past few years, with our IT products and services making their way to the United States and other parts of the developed world," the Pakistani envoy told them. The companies represented at the meeting included Breshna.io, American Institute of Artificial Intelligence, Dingman Center Angels, Capitol Technology, SnappRetail, Accenture, Capital One, Beaj Education, Unboxx Technologies, Nurse Next Door, Teach The World Foundation, Zigron, Gepeto, Xtremelabs LLC, and others, according to the Pakistan Embassy issued press release. "Pakistani tech startups are being supported by the leading

Minister condemns unilateral urea fertilizer price hike

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Saturday has condemned the unilateral price hike of Sarsabz Urea fertilizer by Fatima Fertilizer Limited. He expressed deep concern over an increase of Rs. 561 per urea bag and urged the fertilizer company to withdraws this unilateral increase, said a news release.

The minister said that the fertilizer company must provide solid justification for sudden increases in the price of Sarsabz Urea. He highlighted that there has been no increase in gas prices for the fertilizer industry, adding

that an increase in the price of urea fertilizer without a corresponding increase in gas prices is unacceptable and unjustified. Rana Tanveer Hussain said that in case of failure to provide solid justification, the relevant ministry would determine prices according to the laws. He highlighted the government's commitment to protecting farmers' interests and ensuring the stability of fertilizer prices. Efforts are being made in collaboration with provinces to eliminate hoarding of fertilizers while mechanisms are being developed to check the availability of real-time stock of fertilizers.

MoU between AUP, Pak, Beijing Engineering Research Center for Hybrid Wheat, China

PESHAWAR (APP): A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Agriculture University Peshawar and Pakistan-Beijing Engineering Research Center for the Hybrid Wheat, China in a ceremony held here on Saturday.

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Directorate of Farm, University of Agriculture, Peshawar, Pakistan and the Beijing Engineering Research Center for Hybrid Wheat, China with Vice Chancellor of Agricultural University Peshawar, Pakistan Prof. Dr. Jahan Bakht and

Director of Beijing Engineering Research Center for Hybrid Wheat, China Prof. Dr. Zhang Shengquan signed the agreement.

Director of Farm, University of Agriculture Peshawar, Pakistan Professor Dr. Muhammad Arif was also present on this occasion. The purpose of the MoU is to promote mutual cooperation between the two institutions for future partnership for academic and research agreements. The agreement between Pakistan and China includes development of low water-use wheat hybrids, provision of facilities for

wheat seeds and testing, exchange of faculty, students, research materials and information, support through availability of related technologies, research equipment, joint Integrating innovative efforts into research projects. The agreement will specifically focus on the following areas including Management of human resources in all relevant areas of mutual interest in hybrid wheat and related sciences, diffusion of innovative and adaptive techniques and technologies, provision of training facilities for staff, development of new laboratory equipment.

LCCI urges PM to halt implementation of SRO 350(I)/2024

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) appealed to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to intervene and halt the implementation of Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) 350(I)/2024. President LCCI Kashif Anwar conveyed the business community's apprehensions regarding the potential adverse effects of SRO 350(I)/2024 dated March 7, 2024, according to the LCCI spokesman here Saturday. The SRO 350 establishes a critical link between buyers' tax return

and their suppliers' compliance. This measure has triggered a concerning chain reaction, wherein non-compliance among suppliers threatens to disrupt the entire system. Such a scenario could severely impact businesses across every tier of the supply chain, bringing operations to a standstill. Furthermore, the LCCI President said, the requirement outlined in SRO 350(I)/2024 for the submission of balance sheets, which could potentially contradict previously submitted details, and for record.

Gold rates decrease by Rs.600 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.600 and was sold at Rs.244,400 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs.245,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.541 to Rs.2,09,534 from Rs.2,10,048 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.192,072 from Rs.192,544, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,650 and Rs.2,271.94 respectively.



MULTAN: Laborers are loading heavy wood pieces on tricycle Rickshaw and the tractor trolley at the Timber Market.

KP desires to seek gems' sector accreditation from Thailand: SACM

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordhair has expressed desire for getting accreditation from the Gems Technology Institute of Thailand to achieve the global standards in gems technology.

He expressed these views while speaking as a chief guest during a training workshop organized under the aegis of the National Productivity Organization (NPO) at Gems and Jewelry Centre established under the auspices of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) at Hayatabad here Saturday. He indicated that

Gems Centres would be established in other areas of the province as well. The Special Assistant said that if that experts want, they could be provided a place for gyms business in the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB)'s exhibition centre in Islamabad.

He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was an important stakeholder in the development of the regional economy and there were very vast and useful opportunities for foreign investors in various sectors, which could be utilized by the regional investors. He said that mutual contacts and holding joint forums were essential for finding the possibilities of investment at local level as bilateral cooperation was important platform for promotion.



MULTAN: Women Farmers are busy cutting wheat crop in the field.

LESCO detects 315 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 315 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhpura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 221st day of grand anti-power theft campaign. The LESCO spokesman told media here Saturday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 108 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 07 accused have been arrested by the respective police.

Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice.

Electric fans' export increase 4.75% to \$19.760 mln

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of electric fans from the country witnessed an increase of 4.75 percent during the first nine months of the current financial year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

The country exported electric fans worth US \$19.760 million during July-March (2023-24) as against the exports of US \$18.864 million during July-March (2022-23), showing growth of 4.75 percent, according to the

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). In terms of quantity, the fan export also surged by 20.48 per cent from 1,085 thousand to 1,307 thousand, the data revealed. Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the exports of electric fans also went up by 11.61 per cent during the month of March 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of fans during March 2024 were recorded at \$3.908 million against the exports of \$3.501 million in March.

Chinese company to build photovoltaic factory in Saudi port

RIYADH (Xinhua/APP): A Chinese solar energy infrastructure company has signed an agreement with the Saudi Authority for Industrial Cities and Technology Zones (MODON) to build a photovoltaic production facility in Jeddah, the kingdom's largest port city.

In a statement released on Thursday, Arctech Solar Holding Co. Ltd said the new factory will span roughly 97,000 square meters and boast a projected production capacity of 3 gigawatts (GW), making it Arctech's second major overseas plant after its Gujarat facility in India. A r t e c h e n, headquartered in eastern China's Kunshan city, anticipates that the factory will enable a delivery capacity of up to 10 GW through localized production.

Construction industry backbone of country's economy: Governor

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Muhammad Kamran Khan Tessori has said that the construction industry was the backbone of country's economy. He stated this while addressing an Eid Milan party organized by the Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD),

a Governor House communique said on Saturday. The Governor said that ABAD occupied a prominent place and the construction industry was backbone of the country's economy. He said we all have to make successful the slogan of Green Pakistan.

Ethiopian envoy urges Pakistani banks to open branches in Addis Ababa

FAISALABAD (APP): Mr. Jemal Bekir Abdula, ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, has urged Pakistani banks to open their branches in Addis Ababa to handle business-related transactions. Addressing the business community at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that the Ethiopian government would facilitate businesses and give a quantum jump to bilateral trade. He said that establishing a banking channel is a challenge for him as this instrument would prove a game changer for the promotion of bilateral trade in addition to helping Pakistani exporters to sneak into virgin African markets. He said that Karachi

and Lahore have been linked with Addis Ababa through Ethiopian Airlines while flights from Faisalabad and Sialkot would also start very soon. He said that Ethiopia is producing 98% green energy which is also being exported to three neighboring countries. He said that the literacy rate in Ethiopia is 75-80% while women are also playing a productive role in almost all segments of life. He said that special arrangements have been made at the university level to produce educated and skilled human resources. "For engineering, 70% of the syllabus is related to the topic while the remaining 30% covers all other subjects. A separate ministry of labor and skill was created in 2018.

Business community demands reduction in interest rate

PESHAWAR (APP): Members of the business community urged the government and the State Bank of Pakistan to cut interest rates to flourish industries, trade and businesses and improve the economy of the country.

The business community said prices of import items and raw materials increased exorbitantly owing to the gradual increase in policy rate by the central bank, consequently cost of doing business also increased and inflation also jacked up.

According to details, a meeting of businessmen was held under the Chairmanship of Industrialists Association Peshawar President Ayub Zakori in the IAP office, said in a press release issued here on Saturday. Besides, IAP former presidents, executive members and senior members and industrialists, members of the business community were present on the occasion. The participants of the meeting said that the further increase in the policy rate will work under the prevailing scenario.

"At 25-26pc interest rate, it is hard to borrow from the banks," he said, adding that it will be hard for the government to earn revenue due to a decline in large-scale manufacturing.



ISLAMABAD: A roadside stall holder selling wrist watches in the Federal Capital.

Govt needs to announce special incentives for SMEs to save economy: APBF

ISLAMABAD (INP): The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has demanded the government to announce special incentives for a cash-strapped SMEs with a view to save the economy, as they represent more than 90 percent of around 3.2 million business enterprises in Pakistan, contributing 40 percent to the GDP, employing more than 80 percent of non-agricultural workforce, and generating 25 percent of export earnings.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, President APBF Syed Maaz Mahmood said that Pakistan has remained a

potential market for foreign investors, who still have plans to make fresh investment in the country, but they have continued to wait for the return of economic stability. He highlighted uncertainty in the rupee-dollar parity as one of the major concerns of foreign investors. He said a slowdown in the economy had badly impacted business confidence. It is must for the authorities concerned to first create an enabling environment for the local businessmen desiring to make new investment. Maaz Mahmood advocated the need for raising the country's tax.



LAHORE: Women buying summer clothes at Delhi Darwaza Bazar of Provincial Capital.

Russian missiles hit Ukrainian energy facilities in three regions

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russia launched a barrage of missiles at Ukrainian power facilities on Saturday, hitting locations in the centre and west of the country, damaging equipment and injuring at least one energy worker, officials said. Ukrainian Energy Minister German Galushchenko said on the Telegram messaging app that the Russian strikes targeted the Dnipropetrovsk region in central Ukraine and the western regions of Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk. DTEK, Ukraine's largest private energy company, said its four thermal power stations were hit. "The enemy again massively shelled the Ukrainian energy facilities," DTEK said in a state-

ment. "The company's equipment was seriously damaged. At this very moment, energy workers are trying to eliminate the consequences of the attack." Galushchenko said one energy worker had been injured. DTEK also said there were casualties but provided no other details. The commander of the Ukrainian air force said Russia had launched combined overnight strikes using a total of 34 cruise and ballistic missiles of which Ukrainian air defence shot down 21. Since March 22, Russian forces have ramped up their bombardments of the Ukrainian power sector, attacking thermal and hydropower stations and other energy infrastructure

almost daily. Ukraine has lost about 80% of its thermal generation and about 35% of its hydropower capacity, officials added. Its energy system was already weakened by a Russian air campaign in the first winter of the war that Russia launched in February 2022. Despite mild spring weather in recent weeks, Ukraine has faced an electricity deficit and the government had to introduce scheduled blackouts in several regions and turn to emergency electricity imports. In the Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukrainian air defence shot down 13 Russian missiles, said Governor Serhiy Lysak.



People gather outside Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE) headquarters to show support for the Secretary General of PSOE and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, in Madrid, Spain.

Taiwan reports Chinese military activity after Blinken leaves Beijing

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: Taiwan reported renewed Chinese military activity near the island on Saturday with 12 aircraft crossing the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait, a day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken ended a visit to China. The United States is Taiwan's most important international supporter and arms supplier despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties. Blinken said he had stressed the "critical importance" of maintaining peace and stability across the strait while in China. Democratically governed Taiwan has faced increased military pressure from China, which views the island as its own territory. Taiwan's government rejects those claims. Taiwan's defence min-

istry said that from 9:30 a.m. (0130 GMT) on Saturday it had detected 22 Chinese military aircraft, including Su-30 fighters, of which 12 had crossed the median line to Taiwan's north and centre. The line once served as an unofficial border between the two sides over which neither sides' military crossed, but China's air force now regularly sends aircraft over it. China says it does not recognise the line's existence. Taiwan's defence ministry said the aircraft were involved in "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships, adding that Taiwanese aircraft and ships responded "appropriately". It did not give details. China's defence ministry did not answer calls seeking comment outside of office hours on Saturday.

Erdogan's White House talks with Biden postponed: Turkish official

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: A rare meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his US counterpart Joe Biden at the White House has been postponed, a Turkish official said Friday, amid tensions over the Gaza war. The talks, previously scheduled for May 9, would be the first White House meeting between the two leaders, who last met on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Lithuania in July. "The visit planned for May 9 was postponed because of a change in Erdogan's programme," the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. "A new date will be decided" after an exchange between the two presidents, the official added.

Erdogan's planned visit was never officially announced by the Turkish presidency but a Turkish official told AFP in March that it would take place on May 9. The NATO allies are seeking to rebuild ties strained over a number of disputes including Turkey's delayed approval of Sweden's accession to the NATO alliance. "The postponement is a pretty big deal, since Erdogan has been trying—for three years now—to get invited to the White House to meet US President Biden," said Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Program at The Washington Institute. Erdogan's harsh criticism of Israel's devastating response to the October 7 attack by Hamas is also a thorn in bilateral ties.



Security forces cordon off a street as members of Benin's Trade unions demonstrate to demand higher wages and better working conditions in Cotonou, Benin.



Students and others wearing keffiyeh scarves embrace during a demonstration in support of Palestinians at a protest encampment in the yard of George Washington University in the US capital.

Gaza protests against Israel reach Europe

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: Student-led protests over the war in Gaza were widening in Europe on Friday as activists in France and Britain follow the lead of a campus demonstrations spreading in the US. Protesters in Paris blocked an entrance to elite university Sciences Po on Friday, refusing to back down after a tent "occupation" was broken up by police a day earlier. Activists at University College London were planning a rally in the name of a "global student movement for Palestine", taking inspiration from protests at New York's Columbia University. Tensions flared in front of Paris' prestigious Sciences Po University over the Israeli war on Gaza on Friday as pro-Israeli protesters came to challenge pro-Palestinian students occupying the building. Police moved in to keep the two groups apart. Pro-Palestinian students wore the black-and-white keffiyeh head scarf that has become an emblem of solidarity with Gaza.

Socialist supporters call on Spanish prime minister to stay

Monitoring Desk
MADRID: Thousands of Socialist Party supporters travelled from across Spain for a rally at the party's Madrid headquarters on Saturday to call on Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to stay on, after he stunned the country this week by saying he might quit the premiership. Sanchez said on Wednesday he would step back "for a few days" to decide whether he wants to continue leading the government after a court launched a business corruption probe into his wife's private dealings. He said this was part of a sustained campaign of slander against him and his family by political opponents. Sanchez denies the allegations made against his wife, Begona Gomez, and said he will announce his decision on his future on Monday. "Prime Minister, stay, Pedro, stay. We are with you," Maria Jesus Montero, Deputy Prime Minister and Treasury Minister, told a meeting of the party's federal committee. Outside, euphoric supporters thronged the streets and played popular pop songs urging Sanchez to stay, with many waving flags or with their faces painted.



Voters stand in a queue to cast their ballot at a village in Assam.

Rahul in fray from Kerala as India moves into second phase of polls

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: The second phase of Indian elections on Friday saw 88 constituencies in the fray, including Rahul Gandhi's contest in communist-ruled Kerala. Speculation is rife that he could return to Amethi in Uttar Pradesh to challenge BJP's Smriti Irani. The cabinet minister defeated him in the traditional Gandhi family hub narrowly in 2019. Alternate media claims Priyanka Gandhi will be the Congress candidate from the neighbouring Rae Bareilly constituency after her mother Sonia Gandhi moved over to the Rajya Sabha. A low voter turnout in Uttar Pradesh was below the 60 per cent overall voting in the second phase. Low voting is being seen as unfavourable for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the BJP's bastion. Voters said they did not receive the usual voting slips or reminders from the RSS workers who otherwise shore up the BJP usually. Mr Modi has veered between communal invective against Muslims and wooing Muslim women in the next meeting, announcing some Haj facilities for them.

Water shortages, traffic aggravate India's Bengaluru as it votes

Monitoring Desk
BENGALURU: Dire water shortages, flooding, gridlocked roads and poor civic facilities have become major issues in Bengaluru city, residents in India's tech hub said as they voted on Friday in a general election that is otherwise focused on jobs, inflation and Hindu nationalism. The southern city of about 14 million people, capital of Karnataka state and often called "India's Silicon Valley", voted in the summer heat in the second phase of the world's largest election, set to go on until June 1. Bengaluru is home to thousands of startups and global firms from Walmart to Alphabet's Google and is showcased as a symbol of an ambitious, rising India. But unplanned growth and creaking infrastructure is blotting the booming city. "The water shortage is not a surprise for us, locals. We knew it's coming. Nothing on rain water harvesting has been done by either the central or the state government," Prasanna Raghavan, an IT professional said after casting his vote.

Iran says crew of Israel-linked ship to be released

Monitoring Desk
TEHRAN: Iran's foreign minister said the crew of a seized Portuguese-flagged ship linked to Israel have been granted consular access and are expected to be freed, Iranian media reported on Saturday. Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized the container vessel MSC Aries with a crew of 25 in the Strait of Hormuz on April 13, days after Tehran vowed to retaliate for a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Damascus. Iran had said it could close the crucial shipping route. Recent attacks on merchant shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden by Yemen's Houthis.

Netherlands will consider resuming support to Palestinian UNRWA agency
Monitoring Desk
AMSTERDAM: The Dutch government said it would consider resuming funding for the UN agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) in Gaza if the agency implements recommendations to strengthen its neutrality. The decision follows an investigation by the former French foreign minister Catherine Colonna released on Monday into whether some UNRWA employees were involved in the Oct 7 attack by Hamas.

Philippines denies deal with China over disputed South China Sea shoal
Monitoring Desk
MANILA: The Philippines on Saturday denied a Chinese claim that the two countries had reached an agreement over an escalating maritime dispute in the South China Sea, calling the claim propaganda. A spokesperson at China's embassy in Manila said on April 18 that the two had agreed early this year to a "new model" in managing tensions at the Second Thomas Shoal, without elaborating. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said on Saturday his department was "not aware of, nor is it a party to, any internal agreement with China" since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took office in 2022. Defence department officials have not spoken to any Chinese officials since last year, Teodoro said in a statement. China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Teodoro's comments outside office hours.

Beijing and Manila have repeatedly clashed in recent months at the submerged reef, which Philippines says is in its exclusive economic zone but which China also claims. The Philippines had accused China of blocking manoeuvres and firing water cannons at its vessels to disrupt supply missions to Filipino soldiers stationed in a naval ship which Manila deliberately grounded in 1999 to bolster its maritime claims. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion in annual ship commerce. Its claims overlap with those of the Philippines and four other nations. In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague said China's claims had no legal basis, a decision Beijing rejects.

Tornadoes collapse buildings and level homes in Nebraska and Iowa
Monitoring Desk
OMAHA: Tornadoes wreaked havoc on Friday in the Midwest, causing a building to collapse with dozens of people inside and destroying and damaging hundreds of homes, many around Omaha, Nebraska. As of Friday night, there were several reports of injuries but no immediate deaths reported. Tornado warnings continued to be issued into the night in Iowa. Three people were hurt in Nebraska's Lancaster County when a tornado hit an industrial building, causing it to collapse with 70 people inside. Several were trapped, but everyone was evacuated and the injuries were not life-threatening, authorities said. One of the most destructive tornadoes moved for miles on Friday through mostly rural farmland before chewing up homes and other structures in the suburbs of Omaha, a city of 485,000 people with a metropolitan area population of about 1 million. Photos on social media showed the small city of Minden, Iowa, about 30

Somalia detains US-trained commandos over theft of rations
Monitoring Desk
MOGADISHU: Somalia's government said it had suspended and detained several members of an elite, US-trained commando unit for stealing rations donated by the United States, adding that it was taking over responsibility for provisioning the force. The Danab unit has been a key pillar of U.S.-backed efforts to combat the al Qaeda-linked militant group al Shabaab. The United States agreed in February to spend more than \$100 million to build up to five military bases for Danab.

Stranded ships exit Baltimore port via temporary channel
Monitoring Desk
LOS ANGELES: Four cargo ships, stuck for about a month at the Port of Baltimore by the ruins of the collapsed Francis Scott Key bridge, have exited this week via a temporary channel, according to shipping data. Large ship traffic to and from the port, the busiest in the US for auto shipments, has been severely restricted since the hulking Dali container ship lost power and smashed into the bridge on March 26, bringing it down and blocking the channel.

US intelligence believes Putin probably didn't order Navalny to be killed: report

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US intelligence agencies have determined that Russian President Vladimir Putin most likely did not order the killing of opposition politician Alexei Navalny at an Arctic prison camp in February, The Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday. Navalny, 47 when he died, was Putin's fiercest domestic critic. His allies, branded extremists by the authorities, accused Putin of having him murdered and have said they will provide proof to back their allegation. The Kremlin has denied any state involvement. Last month, Putin called Navalny's demise "sad" and said he had been ready to hand the jailed politician over to the West in a prisoner exchange, provided that Navalny never return to Russia. Navalny's allies said such talks had been underway. The Wall Street Journal, citing anonymous people familiar with the matter, said on Saturday that US intelligence agencies had concluded that Putin probably did not order Navalny to be killed in February. The report said Washington had not absolved the Russian leader of overall responsibility for Navalny's death however, given the opposition politician had been targeted by Russian authorities for years, jailed on charges the West said were politically motivated and had been poisoned in 2020 with a nerve agent. The Kremlin denies state involvement in the 2020 poisoning.

37 million tonnes of debris in Gaza could take years to clear: UN

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: There are some 37 million tonnes of debris to clear away in Gaza once the Israeli offensive is over, a senior official with the UN Mine Action Service said Friday (Apr 26). And unexploded ordnance buried in the rubble would complicate that work, said UNMAS' Pehr Lodhammar, who has run mine programmes in countries such as Iraq. It was impossible to say how much of the ammunition fired in Gaza remained live, said Lodhammar. "We know that typically there is a failure rate of at least 10% of land service ammunition," he told journalists in Geneva. "What we do know is that we estimated 37 million tonnes of debris, which is approximately 300 kilos of debris per square metre," he added. Starting from a hypothetical number of 100 trucks, that would take 14 years to clear away, he said. Lodhammar was speaking as UNMAS launched its 2023 annual report Friday. The war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas erupted when the Palestinian militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel on Oct 7. The attack resulted in the deaths of 1,170 people in Israel, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. Israel vowed to eliminate Hamas, and its ensuing military offensive in Gaza has killed at least 34,356 people, most of them women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

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Govt to promote collaboration with industry, academia, civil society: Jam Kamal

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has reiterated government's stance of promoting partnerships and collaborations between government, industry, academia, and civil society to drive innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly emphasizing technologies supporting Sustainable Development Goals achievement.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the business community especially the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) is committed to promote the cause of intellectual property rights for the promotion and strengthening of the businesses.

He said that the establishment of a world class Expo Centre, a IT Park and an Industrial Estate in Islamabad will assuredly create employment opportunities for youth, nurture exports and augment badly needed foreign exchange earnings. The ICCI President also mentioned Islamabad Chambers' initiatives for the purpose by citing the holding of a Business Opportunities Conference in UAE and Thailand trip to attract foreign investments through joint ventures. Chairman Intellectual Property Organization (IPO) Pakistan, Farukh Amil said adherence to IPRs will enhance Pakistan's reputation as a business and investment-friendly country.

He was addressing a ceremony organized by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in collaboration with IPO-Pakistan on the occasion of World Intellectual Property Day noted IP's enabling role across sectors, supporting advancements in healthcare, sustainable agriculture, and clean energy solutions.

Jam Kamal Khan endorsed ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari's proposals for the establishment of a world class Expo-Center, IT Park and formation of an Industrial Estate demands for promoting trade and investment opportunities in the federal capital. The minister commerce pledged the incorporation of business community's proposals in the upcoming federal bud-

get to promote businesses in Pakistan and also said that ICCI's demand for curtailing the tenure of traders elected bodies from two years to one year will be given due weight.

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ISLAMABAD: District Judiciary Judges in a group photo with Hon'ble Mr. Justice Athar Minallah at the Federal Judicial Academy.

Senate chairman emphasizes economic cooperation, regional connectivity for sustainable peace

LAHORE (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani highlighted the importance of economic cooperation and regional connectivity in fostering sustainable peace.

Speaking at a one-day International Conference on "Navigating Regional Dynamics: from Conflict to Cooperation in South Asia," hosted by Minhaj University here on Saturday, he said that the conference had brought together esteemed international and national speakers to discuss key issues

facing South Asia.

Gilani praised the organizers for facilitating dialogue and understanding on regional affairs, noting the significance of such efforts in addressing the challenges and opportunities in the region. He acknowledged the multitude of challenges South Asia faces, including historical disputes, political tensions, security threats, and cross-border issues such as terrorism and drug smuggling. Despite these challenges, he reiterated Pakistan's commitment to regional and inter-

national peace. He emphasized Pakistan's role in facilitating dialogue and peace talks, as well as its significant contributions to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Additionally, he highlighted Pakistan's efforts in hosting talks between Afghanistan, the Taliban, and the United States government, aiming to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani outlined a transformative approach to navigating regional dynamics, em-

phasizing a shift from traditional geopolitics to the realm of geoeconomics. This reorganization and emphasis on interdependence among nations mark a significant evolution in strategy.

He expressed optimism about the opportunities this paradigm shift brings, transcending borders to foster mutual understanding and prosperity. Envisioning the region as an engine of growth, he underscored the importance of collaborative efforts towards poverty alleviation.



OTTAWA: A Group photo of distinguished participants with Ambassador Maryam Aftab and High Commissioner Zaheer A. Janjua at the end of the fifth round of Pakistan Canada Bilateral Political Consultations.

Saudi ministry warns against fraudulent Hajj schemes

Urges vigilance, official channels for booking

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has advised pilgrims not to fall prey to fraudulent schemes and to exclusively book their sacred journey through authorized companies. It emphasized that performing Hajj without a proper permit constitutes a legal violation, subject to enforcement.

The ministry said reservations for performing Hajj rituals within Saudi Arabia are facilitated through the official website and the Nusuk application. Pilgrims from Europe, America, and Australia can book Hajj through the Nusuk platform while booking from Islamic countries is handled by designated reservation offices, it added.

An official source from the ministry has cautioned individuals intending to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage this year against

fraudulent Hajj campaigns proliferating on social media platforms across various nations.

It said the ministry has diligently monitored advertisements from companies and campaigns, as well as identified fake accounts on social networks. The source said individuals must exercise vigilance against such deceptive campaigns and companies that falsely claim to organize Hajj at enticing prices.

Furthermore, the ministry has expressed gratitude towards Iraq's Supreme Authority for Hajj and Umrah, alongside its authorities, for their collaborative efforts leading to the apprehension of over 25 counterfeit companies involved in commercial Hajj activities. It underscored the importance for all nations to take decisive measures in addressing such ir-

regularities and combating counterfeiting practices.

The ministry stipulated that individuals intending to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage from outside Saudi Arabia must obtain a Hajj visa. Those holding visits, tourism, work, transit, or other visas are prohibited from participating in Hajj rituals within Saudi Arabia, it maintained.

The ministry said every Muslim must adhere strictly to the established rules and regulations and refrain from engaging with fictitious companies or offices offering fraudulent Hajj services. The ministry remains vigilant in monitoring the advertisements of these fraudulent companies and campaigns urging everyone to cooperate in combating and reporting such activities, and above all, curbing the proliferation of unauthorized Hajj arrangements.

Govt forms committee for revival of PSM

KARACHI (INP): The Federal Ministry of Industry and Production on Saturday constituted an 8-member committee to revive the Pakistan Steel Mills.

According to the official notification, the committee headed by the Federal Secretary of Industry and Production include the Additional Secretary of Industry and Production, Senior Member of the Board of Revenue Sindh, Joint Secretary of Finance, CEO of PIDC, and representatives of the Worker Union of Steel Mills and two independent board members of the steel mills, including the Director Technical and Corporate Secretary.

Investigators make headway in attack on foreigners in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have found clues in the suicide attack on the vehicle of foreigners in Manshra Colony of Landhi area.

Two passers-by were killed while five Japanese nationals escaped unhurt in suicide attack on the vehicle they were travelling on April 19. The CTD officials said they have found clue of the motorcycle used by the attackers.

Educational, housing projects marks new era for Balochistan's mines workers

QUETTA (APP): The Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) Balochistan has launched a series of welfare projects worth Rs 1.8 million to enhance living standards and educational opportunities for mine and industrial registered workers across the region.

An official source told APP, the cornerstone of these projects was the establishment of a Girls High School with Staff Residences in Muslim Bagh, Balochistan, designed to provide quality education to the children of 5,605 mine and industrial workers, symbolizing a substantial leap towards gender inclusivity and educational accessibility in the area.

Constructed over 63,000 square feet and with an investment of Rs.700 Million, the school and residences represent a beacon

of hope for the future generation of Balochistan. SAPM Malik stressed ensuring that the project is completed within 24 months.

He said that the former government also laid the foundation stone for 100 worker residence quarters in Muslim Bagh. This housing project, covering 5 acres and costing an estimated Rs.900 Million, will provide secure and comfortable homes for 100 families, directly tackling the housing shortage that plagues the workers' community. The project is set to be completed within 24 months.

He said that a school now has opened its doors to the children of approximately 4,000 mine workers, further underscoring the government's dedication to workers' welfare.



KHUZDAR: Commandant FC Kalat Scouts Colonel Hafiz Kashif visiting free medical camp. Dr. Fayyaz and XEN QESCO Abdul Qayyum Bangulzai are also present

Balochistan govt made effective arrangements for 3-day Hinglaj Mata Festival

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan government has made effective arrangements to provide maximum facilities to the Hindu devotees gathered at Hinglaj Mata Temple to perform religious rituals.

The three-day annual Hinglaj Mata festival of the Hindu community, started on the other day, was in full swing with traditional religious fervor.

Hinglaj Mata temple is the historical temple of Hindus located in Lasbela district of the province, Hindu community from across the country reached Hinglaj Mata in a large numbers to participate in the annual festival. Additional Deputy Commissioner General and Focal Person Hinglaj Mata Festival Sayed Yasin Akhtar has visited Hinglaj Temple and reviewed the security arrangements. He also visited the medical camp set up under the health plan for the three-day festival of Hinglaj Mata Mandir.

Focal Person of Hinglaj Mata Festival,

ADC General Lasbela Sayed Yasin Akhtar was told that paramedical staff and doctors of Emergency Rescue Center have been appointed in the medical camp and over 100 volunteers of Hinglaj Shiva Mandli Committee are also assisting in providing facilities to the pilgrims along with the administration.

ADC General Lasbela and Focal Person Hinglaj Mata Mela Sayed Yasin Akhtar said in a media briefing that PDMA would provide ration, water cooler, sanitizer and other necessary items for Yatries.

He said that due to flood, the bridge on Hangul River has been damaged, the DG PDMA has been provided rescue boats, expert swimmers and ambulances for the safety of devotees. The people of the Hindu community are performing their religious rituals freely without fear and danger. In Pakistan, the minorities have complete religious freedom and their places of worship are protected, he maintained.

Tharii-Ranipur section to be completed by Dec 2024: Aleem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has said that the repair work of the 52 km long Tharii-Ranipur section would be completed by December 2024 at the cost of Rs 498 million.

He expressed these views while responding to an attention notice in the National Assembly presented by the members of the National Assembly, Ms Nafisa Shah, Ms Naz Baloch and Ms Mehtab Akbar Rashidi, in which attention was drawn to the immediate repair of the highway as mentioned above.

Giving details of the repair work, Aleem Khan said that repairing the Tharii-Ranipur section schemes was in the procurement process and their financial bids had been opened on April 24, 2024.

Another housemaid found dead in Lahore's Johar Town

LAHORE (INP): In a tragic incident, another housemaid was found dead in a house on Samsani Road near Lahore's Johar Town.

According to family of the deceased, 30-year-old housemaid, Aliza who got married recently, was found allegedly murdered in Lahore's Johar Town. They said that Aliza had been working at the residence for some time. On the day of the incident, Aliza went to work but was later found dead in the courtyard with blood coming from her nose and mouth.

Police have confirmed that Aliza was murdered, and the homeowner has been taken into custody. A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway. Incidents of inflicting torture on servants seem to be on the rise.

PM convenes meeting of Selection Board for promotions

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to convene a meeting of the Selection Board to promote from grade 18 officers to grade 22 in the Centre. The Prime Minister has directed the Establishment Division to make all preparations for the start of a session of the board. During the session, the promotion of the government officers from grade 18 to grade 22 will be reviewed in detail.

CM praises child singer Tariq from Dera Bugti, announces to bear expenses of his education

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has praised the child singer Tariq and announced to bear all his educational expenditures at the government level.

In this regard, the Chief Minister issued directives to the district administration to bear the expenditures of education of the child singer.

The child singer Tariq and his father met Deputy Commissioner Dera Bugti, Azhar Shahzad.

The Deputy Commissioner Dera Bugti said that the educational expenditures of Tariq would be borne by the government

on directives of Chief Minister Balochistan.

He said that admission of Tariq would be made after summoning the Principal of School from Sui.

He said that singer Tariq belongs to a poor family, this is why, Chief Minister directed to extend wholehearted assistance to him.

The Deputy Commissioner said that the way Tariq brightened the name of Dera Bugti in singing, he would also work hard for proving the mettle in academics.

He assured that the government would also cooperate for education of other brothers and sisters of the child singer.



BEIJING: Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Mr. Khalil Hashmi speaking at the Pakistan Professionals and Students Forum hosted by Pakistan Embassy.

Pakistan Embassy in Beijing Hosts Pakistan Professional and Student Forum

ISLAMABAD (PR): The Embassy of Pakistan today hosted "Pakistan Professionals and Students Forum" under the theme "Building Bridges between Academia and Industry", which brought together high-ranking government officials, private sector representatives, members of academia as well as a large number of Pakistani professionals and students residing in China.

The forum featured a pre-recorded message from Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, underscoring the importance of building bridges between academia and industry for national development and prosperity. The Federal

Minister commended Pakistan Embassy for providing a platform to Pakistani students and professionals to interact and exchange ideas on harnessing the current and emerging opportunities in the industry. Messages from Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Mr. Moin-ul-Haque, former Ambassador of Pakistan to China and Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training were also played on the occasion. In his welcome address, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi commended the Pakistani community for its contributions to solidifying the "all weather strategic cooperative partnership" between China and Pakistan.

Director takes notice of students absence in UoB's Sub Campus Mastung

QUETTA 27 (APP): Director University of Balochistan (UoB) Sub Campus Mastung Mohammad Iqbal Tareen visited the academic blocks on Saturday.

He also conducted a faculty meeting and took strict notice of the absence of students. During the meeting, all the teachers were asked for the attendance to submit report of the students.

He also instructed to ensure the attendance of the students immediately. He

also urged parents to support the institution in shaping the future of their children. Furthermore, Iqbal Tareen highlighted the students' attendance and said that students would not be allowed to participate in the examination if their attendance was less than the required number.

Director Campus Iqbal Tareen strongly directed the teachers to use all their abilities to compensate the educational loss of the students by conducting extra classes.

Asif Tareen condemns bid on life of Jumma Khan, demands arrest of culprits

Independent Report QUETTA: The spokesman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Muhammad Asif Tareen has condemned the bid on life of senior leader of the party, Jumma Khan Khilji and demanded of the government to arrest the culprits involved in it.

Asif Tareen was speaking to the office bearers and workers of PTI on occasion of inquiring about health of Jumma Khan Khilji on Saturday.

The spokesman of PTI pointed out that the culprits easily fled after making bid on life of Jumma Khan Khilji in the broad daylight.

He said that this is question mark on perfor-

mance of the police and other concerned institutions that culprits could not be arrested after committing the crime.

He said that we are in contact with the high ups and hope that Chief Minister, Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police would take notice of the incident and take the culprits to task.

He said that a joint meeting of the party leaders was called under leadership of provincial president, Dawood Shah Kakar in which the bid on life of Jumma Khan Khilji was strongly condemned and demanded to arrest the culprits involved in the incident.



QUETTA: MS Civil Hospital Dr. Ishaq Panezai, Director Nursing Ms. Kalsoom, Nursing Superintendent Mr. Riaz, Principal Nursing Manzoor Ahmed Raisani and others giving away shield and certificate to Jozfeen Shan and other nursing on retirement

Pakistan, Canada agree to deepen bilateral cooperation in multiple domains

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 5th Round of Pakistan-Canada Bilateral Political Consultations was held in Ottawa wherein the two sides agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation in multiple domains. The Pakistan side was led by Ambassador Mariam Aftab, Additional Foreign Secretary (Americas), while the Canadian delegation was headed by Assistant Deputy Minister (Indo-Pacific) Weldon Epp, Global Affairs Canada, according to a press release received on Saturday. The two sides reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and identified opportunities and possibilities for further cooperation, especially in the spheres of trade, investment, education, parliamentary exchanges, counter

terrorism and people-to-people contacts.

The Additional Foreign Secretary briefed on Pakistan's foreign policy priorities and invited Canadian companies to invest in energy, mining and IT sectors in Pakistan. The two sides discussed mutual collaboration at international fora, including the UN, and agreed to further deepen cooperation. They expressed satisfaction at the overall progress in bilateral relations and committed to enhance cooperation in all fields of mutual interest. The Canadian side was apprised of recent developments in the South Asian region, especially Afghanistan, Pakistan-India relations and human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.



QUETTA: Secretary Communication & Works Qambar Dashti presiding over a meeting to review progress on ongoing development projects in Khuzdar Zone (Building)