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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari address to the joint session of parliament Speaker of National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq presiding the session in Parliament House

Calls for steering country out of political crisis

President calls for meaningful dialogue, consensus to take Pakistan forward

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday, stressing for turning a new page and making a fresh start, called for a meaningful dialogue, parliamentary consensus and fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and political reconciliation to do away with the polarisation and overcome the challenges pervading the country.

"In my considered view, it is time to turn a new page... The challenges we face are not impossible to overcome. They just require the fundamentals of a meaningful dialogue and parliamentary consensus... We can effectively tackle our challenges and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and political reconciliation," the president said addressing the Joint Session of the Parliament. Chaired by National Assembly Speaker

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the joint sitting was attended by members of the National Assembly and Senate, while in the galleries were provincial chief ministers and legislators, diplomats, and representatives from political parties.

The president's address was in pursuance of Article 56 (3) of the Constitution which marked the beginning of the first parliamentary year, following the general elections.

The address encompassed major national and international matters, and challenges from economy, poverty, social welfare, women empowerment and foreign policy to Kashmir and Palestine as well as climate change.

He said having given away his powers to the Parliament, his role was as a unifying symbol of a joint robust federation, where all people and provinces

should be treated as equal before the law.

As a new beginning, he said, the country needed to build its strengths by investing in people, focusing on public needs, and harnessing its resources to create pathways to inclusive growth. "We have little time to waste. The country needs to move on from the polarisation so common now to contemporary politics," he remarked and sought the role of two Houses of the Parliament in rebuilding public confidence in the parliamentary process.

Calling for resetting the political atmosphere with "more light than heat", he emphasised reforms to promote good governance and turn challenges into opportunities.

President Zardari said that by embracing the visions of the great leaders Q u a i d - e - A z a m

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, "we can effectively tackle challenges and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and political reconciliation". The president emphasised that in order to align the country with the 21st Century requirements, it was imperative to move forward on reforms with good governance for the provision of optimal social entitlements to the citizens.

He said besides working on economic reforms, spurring jobs, reducing inflation and expanding the tax net, the Federal Government should also promote positive working relationships and effective coordination, within the constitutional framework, with the provinces.

"This is absolutely essential for promoting an in-

clusive national development agenda and rolling out policies that execute tangible action on the ground."

President Zardari stressed the government to intensify its efforts for attracting foreign direct investment, implementing comprehensive ease-of-doing-business reforms and simplifying the existing regulations to provide an enabling environment to both foreign and domestic investors.

At the same time, he also emphasised to diversify exports, enhance the competitiveness of domestic products in global markets, introduce value addition, and venture into new international markets. Similarly, the huge untapped potential in the agriculture, marine life, information technology and textile sectors should also be exploited to earn foreign exchange, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Saudi Investment in Pakistan following the recent visit of Saudi Delegation.

Pakistan's economic reforms more important than size of new bailout package: IMF

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is ready to support Pakistan and the package of reforms is now more important than the size of new programme, the global lender's Middle East and Central Asia director said on Thursday.

"I think what is important at this stage is to accelerate the reforms, double down on the structure of reforms in order to provide Pakistan with its full potential of growth," Jihad Azour told a press conference on the sidelines of the IMF 2024 Spring Meetings.

The statement comes as Foreign Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, who is currently in Washington, initiated discussions with the IMF for a new multibillion-dollar loan agreement to support its economic reform programme.

Pakistan is nearing the end of a nine-month, \$3-billion SBA with the IMF designed to tackle a balance-of-payments crisis, which brought it to the brink of default last summer.

With the final \$1.1 billion tranche of that deal likely to be approved later this month, Pakistan began negotiations for a new multi-year IMF loan programme worth "billions" of dollars, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told AFP in Washington earlier this week.

Badar Shahbaz appointed PM's media coordinator

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday appointed Badar Shahbaz, a member of the Pakistan Muslim League-N's media team, as his Media Coordinator.

"The Prime Minister has been pleased to appoint Mr. Badar Shahbaz as Media Coordinator to Prime Minister with immediate effect. The Prime Minister has further been pleased to desire that all relevant stakeholders shall extend full cooperation to the Coordinator in discharging the official business," according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division on Thursday.

Badar Shahbaz also serves as Central Assistant Secretary Information of PML-N, besides being a key member of the party's media team. Badar Shahbaz had also served as coordinator to the prime minister during the previous 16-month government led by Shehbaz Sharif.

Will personally monitor Saudi investment projects; no laxity to be tolerated: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that he would personally monitor the Saudi investment projects and warned against any laxity due to red tape or outdated procedures.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the matters related to the recent high-powered Saudi delegation and Saudi investment in different sectors, thanked Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for sending a high-level Saudi delegation that would usher new era of Saudi investment in Pakistan, trade partnership as well as business ties.

He lauded the relevant federal ministers, Special Investment Facilitation Council and relevant senior officers for their efforts for converting the Saudi delegation's visit into a mutually beneficial partnership.

The prime minister instructed the authorities concerned to engage world-class experts to execute the foreign investment projects and called for capacity building of the ministries to achieve the desired results.

He asked the Board of Investment, SIFC and relevant ministries to devise a mechanism to ensure execution of the projects agreed with the Saudi delegation.

He told the expected visit of a delegation of prominent Saudi businessmen to Pakistan was welcomed and that further investment opportunities would also be explored during his visit to Saudi Arabia to attend the World Economic Forum to be held in the Kingdom.

He said both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoyed cordial brotherly ties and the Kingdom always supported Pakistan in every hour of need.

Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked the Saudi King and Crown Prince for their keen interest in promoting cooperation and partnership with Pakistan.

GoB fully ready to conduct re-polling & by-elections in transparently & peacefully: CS

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has stated that the provincial government is fully ready to conduct re-polling and by-elections in different districts of the province.

He issued directives to the concerned authorities to ensure timely completion of the arrangements besides providing desired facilities and ensuring transport and security at all the respective polling stations.

The Chief Secretary urged the political parties and election candidates to cooperate with the district

CM grieved over loss of lives of 7 persons during rains in Chaman

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has expressed sorrow over the loss of lives of seven persons including women and children during the Rai in Chaman. In a condolence statement issued here on Thursday, the Chief Minister expressed heartfelt grief over the loss of precious lives in the natural calamity.

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti said that we are with bereaved families in the time of grief. The Chief Minister directed all concerned departments and district administration to remain alert during rains.

He also directed to carry out relief activities.

Threat alert: DC Pishin asks JUI to postpone public gathering

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Pishin Juma Dad Mandokhail on Thursday asked the leadership of Jameat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) to postpone public gathering scheduled to be held on 20th April, in Pishin district of Balochistan due to a possible threat alert.

In a letter issued to the provincial leadership of JUI-F, DC warned unknown terrorists are planning to carry out Attacks at JUI-F public gathering to be held at Pishin held on 20th April.

Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday visited the entire building of NADRA headquarters in Islamabad and inspected all sections including printing. Mohsin Naqvi instructed for setting up model NADRA offices across the country on the pattern of model police stations established in Punjab.

He said establishing model NADRA offices will improve service delivery and provide convenience to the public.

NADRA Chairman Lieutenant General



HUB: View of Pishukan to Gwadar link Shabi bridge once again washed away in water relay after massive rainfall in Hub

Interior Minister orders blocking SIMs issued on invalid, expired ID cards

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has ordered National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) to block all mobile phone SIMs issued on invalid and expired identity cards.

Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday visited the entire building of NADRA headquarters in Islamabad and inspected all sections including printing. Mohsin Naqvi instructed for setting up model NADRA offices across the country on the pattern of model police stations established in Punjab.

He said establishing model NADRA offices will improve service delivery and provide convenience to the public.

NADRA Chairman Lieutenant General

PTI declares CJP responsible for harassment of judges

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI has declared Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) responsible for harassment of judges from Supreme Court (SC) to High Court (HC).

According to PTI spokesperson powers that be, their tributary administration and puppet elite class together are out to poke last nail in the coffin of justice.

According to spokesperson the courts are being transformed into Kangaroo courts by harassing the judges at all level from SC to subordinate courts.

The judges who are hearing cases against politically victimized PTI leaders and workers whenever insist on deciding the

cases in the light of law instead of taking dictation from secret agents of state are being subjected to fear through references and state campaigns of character assassination besides using kidnapping and violence as weapon against the family members and relatives of judges.

Instead of taking decisive action on the letter written by 6 judges of IHC the matter is being prolonged and this way the state rogues are being given chance to play at their will.

The CJP is being seen failed to protect the independence of judiciary and save the judges from harassment,



QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over a meeting regarding preparation for bye polls in different districts

Pakistan, Turkiye vow to expand bilateral defense collaboration

COAS, Turkish general discuss matters of mutual interest; General Gürak lauds Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional peace; Both sides agree on forging deeper strategic ties.

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Metin Gürak met Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir in Rawalpindi on Thursday.

The discussion encompassed various topics of mutual interest, spanning defence, training, and initiatives aimed at bolstering regional peace and stability.

Both sides acknowledged the robust relationship between their nations and committed to expanding defense collaboration further. The Army Chief underscored the imperative of advancing existing military cooperation between their armed forces.

The visiting dignitary commended Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional

peace and stability, as well as the Pakistan Army's role in combating terrorism.

Earlier, upon arrival at GHQ, the Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Army paid respects at Yadgar-e-Shuhada by laying a floral wreath. A well-presented contingent of the Pakistan Army rendered a guard of honour to the esteemed visitor.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Metin Gürak meeting with Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir

Justice Hashim, Justice Ishtiaq appointed BHC, PHC CJs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Law and Justice on Thursday notified the appointment of Acting Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) Ishtiaq Ibrahim, as PHC Chief Justice and Acting Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court (BHC) Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar as BHC Chief Justice.

The ministry, in its notifications, said that the appointments were made by the President of Pakistan in exercise of the powers conferred under clause (1) of Article 193 of the Constitution with effect from the date they would take oath of their offices.

Similarly, the Law Ministry also notified the appointment of three additional judges Justice Fazal Subhan, Justice Shahid Khan and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal as the PHC judges.

Address of Zardari to joint session of Parliament: President provides comprehensive roadmap to political parties for resolving public issues: CM

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that the President Asif Ali Zardari has provided comprehensive roadmap to all political parties for resolving the public issues through combined platform.

The Chief Minister stated so in a statement issued here on Thursday marking address of the President Zardari to joint session of parliament on commencement of first parliamentary year.

He described the address of President Zardari and said that he stressed the need to end politics of polarisation from the country because the country is in need of unity.

The Chief Minister recalled that when he (Zardari) had been elected president for the first time then he had made historic decisions making parliament empowered.

Sarfraz Bugti said that the President is symbol of a strong federation and he would take all provinces

equally.

He said that the country can't afford any chaos and we have to serve the masses a lot by mobilizing all the resources.

In this regard, the President Zardari has expressed his vision for development and reconstruction of the country, Chief Minister said adding that the president has also presented comprehensive strategy for resolving the challenges being faced at the internal and external fronts.

The president also spoke at length about the future roadmap including opportunities of investment, education, health and employments in the country in his address to the joint session of parliament.

The president gave clear message to all the political parties that parliament is center of public service and our survival lies in democracy, the Chief Minister added.

He said that PPP would continue to serve the masses as per its manifesto.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Power Sector.

PM orders for boosting privatization, outsourcing process of power Discos

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the relevant authorities to accelerate the process of privatization and outsourcing of the power distribution companies (Discos). Chairing a high-level meeting regarding power sector here, the prime minister said the assistance of private sector experts and globally accepted models should be taken to improve the management affairs of the distribution companies (DISCOs). He also directed to prepare and present a comprehensive plan in the next meeting to improve the power system in the country. The prime minister said reforms in the power sector would help reduce the country's circular debt. He also vowed not to allow electricity thieves and other elements to harm the country's treasury. In the meeting, the recommendation and measures with respect to prevent the power theft, reorganization of National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) and new projects of the electricity transmission were presented.

The meeting was told that Matiari-Rahim yar Khan transmission line and Ghazi Barotha-Faisalabad line will be constructed to ensure the power transmission from Southern part of the country. The meeting was further informed that a comprehensive strategy had been evolved for the reorganization of NTDC to bring reforms in the power transmission system and to minimize the government's circular debts. The prime minister directed to complete all the reforms' initiatives within the stipulated time. The meeting was attended by the federal ministers Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Sardar Awaiz Khan Leghari, Dr Musadik Malik, Abdul Aleem Khan, Ataullah Tarar, Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, former power minister Muhammad Ali, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jehanzeb Khan, Member of National Assembly Bilal Azhar Kayani, Engineer Qamar ul Islam, Rana Ehsan Afzal, Salman Ahmed and other concerned officials.

Prudent policies, reforms poised to result in sustainable economic growth: Governor SBP

Independent Report
KARACHI: Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmed highlighting country's substantial improvements in macroeconomic outlook hoped that time bound reforms will put the economy on the path of sustainable economic growth. Governor SBP expressed the views during his meetings with key international investors during multiple events organized by leading global banks and financial firms, including JP Morgan, Citibank and Jefferies, on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington DC, said a statement issued here.

He informed the participants about the substantial improvement in Pakistan's macroeconomic outlook achieved over the past year as a result of a prudent monetary policy, backed adequately by fiscal consolidation and beginning of the implementation of key structural reforms. Governor referring to sharp decline in inflation over the past year from a peak of 38 percent in May 2023 to the two-year low of 20.7 percent in March 2024 explained that the deceleration in inflation is broad-based, reflecting the combined impact of monetary tightening, fiscal consolidation, ease in import supplies, improved agriculture output and base effect. "More importantly, core inflation declined markedly, reaching 15.7 percent in March, after persistently staying above 20 percent throughout last year," he added. The governor informed the participants that the external sector has also stabilized, as reflected in the sharp reduction in the current account deficit (CAD) to \$1 billion during Jul-Feb FY24 from \$3.8 billion in the same period last year. In addition to stabilization policies, improved agriculture output has contributed to higher food exports.

FPCCI waives off 50% membership fee of women chambers

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) on Thursday announced waiver off 50% membership fee for women chambers. President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh in a statement issued here said that the country and society cannot progress without the full role of women, adding the initiative of reducing membership fee was important for women empowerment.

"We have fulfilled our promise, for which the full credit goes to the leadership of United Business Group (UBG), who had promised this during the election campaign," he added. Ikram said that Pakistani women were extremely talented and the chamber was striving to empower them in the economic field. "If Pakistan is to progress, we have to make our women educated, skilled and empowered to business women," he added.



WASHINGTON: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb interacted with representatives of Deutsche Bank.

ICCI pledges to have a female president soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has pledged to have its first female president soon followed by other chambers across the country. The facilitation centers for women home-based workers would be established in all the provincial capitals. This was disclosed by the Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Nilofar Bukhtiar during the Eid Milan and Award Ceremony held here Thursday. On this occasion, Lansana Woneh, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, also praised the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) efforts in the Economic Growth of Women at the Eid Milan and Award distribution event.

KP Govt decides to establish Gem Processing & Export Centre

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to develop gemstone sector as formal export sector and for this purpose the gemstone cluster at Namak Mandi would be developed in the shape of Gems Processing & Export Centre. The Gem Export Center will be redesigned and shifted to a spacious and suitable building equipped with all international standards. In this regard, a high-level meeting was held on Thursday in the committee room of the Industries Department here at Civil Secretariat, Peshawar with Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commerce and Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordhir in the chair. Besides, Secretary Industries, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah and Special Secretary Muhammad Anwar Khan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) Javed Iqbal Khattak, Executive Director of Federal Export Development Fund (EDF) Samiullah Khan and Director Zafar, PDA and Local Government Officers, representatives of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) Gemstones Association and officers of other relevant departments also attended the meeting.

MoU signed for skilled manpower in AJK: PM lauds initiative

MIRPUR (APP): Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime Minister, Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq Thursday termed signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between state-run TEVTA and NAVTTC as a significant development. He emphasized the importance of talented and educated individuals, particularly the youth, leveraging this opportunity for skill development. The AJK PM highlighted that the MoU would contribute to

reducing unemployment in the region. The signing ceremony, held at Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis and Executive Director NEVTC Aamir Jan and TEVTA Chairman Chaudhry Farid Ahmed present on the occasion. Senior Minister Col. (retd) Waqar Ahmad Noor, Minister TEVTA Sardar Amir Altaf, Chief Secretary Dawood Muhammad Burich, Chairman NEVTC Ms. Gulmina Bilal, and other officials attended the event.

Finance Minister rules out rupee devaluation in talks with IMF

ISLAMABAD (Online): Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has ruled out any further significant rupee devaluation ahead of talks with International Monetary Fund. Speaking at roundtable meeting with Bloomberg team in Washington, he said there is no reason for rupee devaluation as Pakistan has solid foreign-exchange reserves, stable currency, rising remittances and steady exports.



HYDERABAD: Farmers are busy in their works to earn their livelihood for support their families, at a field located on Tando Jam near Hyderabad.

Country prepared to become tech hub: Shaza Fatima

LAHORE (APP): State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Thursday said that the country was prepared to become regional tech hub and IT leader. She said this while addressing a press conference along with Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) Secretary General Deemah Al Yahya at a local hotel. She said, "Youth is our asset and we have strong connectivity," adding that Pakistan had partners like Saudi Arabia and other countries which wanted to strengthen this sector. The State Minister said that recently Saudi Arabia foreign minister and representative of Investment Ministry visited Pakistan, adding that country's IT sector was also highlighted during meetings with the delegation from Saudi Arabia.

She further said that Digital Foreign Direct Investment conference would be organized at the end of this year, adding that World Economic Forum, Digital Cooperation Organization and Pakistan would host conference every year to bring investment in the country for IT sector, manufacturing, software and telecommunication sides as well. She further said that these initiatives and the policies of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif aimed at supporting private sector would yield positive results to put the country on road to progress. Shaza Fatima said that the incumbent government was working on various policies and legislation whether it was related to data protection, cyber security, cloud policy to create feasible environment for growth of IT, tech and telecom sectors. She said, "Pakistan is a founding member of



LAHORE: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja and Ms. Deemah Al-Yahya, Secretary General Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) cutting ribbon to inaugurate 24th ITCN Asia 2024 at Expo Centre.

Zong business revolutionizes digital landscape for CGCMS through recent partnership

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong Business, Pakistan's leading telecom operator has joined hands with China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC) is a key subsidiary of China Energy Engineering Group Co., Ltd., a prominent state-owned enterprise, said a news release issued here on Thursday. CGGC specializes in

ambitious goals without hindrance. Founded in 1970, China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC) is a key subsidiary of China Energy Engineering Group Co., Ltd., a prominent state-owned enterprise, said a news release issued here on Thursday. CGGC specializes in

various sectors including water conservancy, power generation, infrastructure construction, and real estate development, encompassing design, construction, investment, and operation services. CGCMS' expertise combined with Zong 4G's proficiency in network architecture, security,



SIALKOT: A person filling water in pot at water filtration plant with petrol pump style water nozzle at Mubarak Pura.

SAARC BAZAAR – A way Forward for South Asian Businesses

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD / SAARC BAZAAR: Empowering Trade, Fostering Growth, and Celebrating Diversity WWW.SAARCBAZAAR.COM, the innovative e-commerce platform designed to revolutionize trade within the SAARC region, is now officially live. With a vision to connect global consumers by providing a 100% free-of-cost, user-friendly e-commerce portal that bridges traders across the SAARC region, including MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) and entrepreneurs, particularly women who own home-

based industries, SAARCBAZAAR is strategically positioned to capitalize on this growth by fostering regional economic integration and empowering businesses and consumers alike. The SAARC region, projected by the World Bank to be the world's fastest-growing region in 2024 with a 6% output growth, is poised for a significant economic leap. SAARCBAZAAR goes beyond commerce by highlighting the rich cultural heritage and tourist attractions of each SAARC country. Explore the best of art, cuisine, and history while conducting business.

Businesses from all corners of the SAARC region can now showcase their products, services, and source materials effortlessly. The platform facilitates direct connections between traders, manufacturers, and consumers with just a click. SAARCBAZAAR serves as an invaluable resource for accessing up-to-date economic data, news, and information on trade events and exhibitions within the SAARC region. It is committed to fostering self-employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. For women entrepreneurs, especially

those in peri-urban and remote areas, the platform provides a level playing field to showcase their talents and products. Businesses registered with regional commerce chambers and women entrepreneurs receive distinctive identity badges. This spotlight feature enhances visibility and credibility, promoting trust among consumers. SAARCBAZAAR proudly pioneers a first-of-its-kind reporting mechanism for NTMs and NTBs. An open database system ensures prompt resolution of potential trade issues through formal channels. "SAARCBAZAAR

is more than an e-commerce platform; it's a gateway to economic prosperity. By connecting businesses, celebrating diversity, and addressing trade barriers, we aim to transform the SAARC region." - Zohaib Mushtaq, Project Co-ordinator, SAARCBAZAAR. ABOUT SAARCBAZAAR: SAARCBAZAAR is a non-profit initiative supported by trade bodies, and development agencies. Its mission is to create a vibrant ecosystem that fosters economic growth, inclusivity, and cross-cultural exchange within the SAARC region.

PTCL posts 14 % revenue growth

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has announced its financial results for the first quarter of 2024 posting 14 per cent revenue growth Year-on-Year basis to Rs 49 billion, mainly driven by strong performance in the consumer segment led by fixed broadband, mobile data, and wholesale & business solutions. The announcement was made during a board of directors meeting on Thursday. PTCL continued its strong performance throughout Q1, 2024 and achieved revenue of Rs 26 billion for this quarter,

which is 13% higher than last year, mainly driven by growth in fixed line and business solutions segments, said a news release. Flash Fiber, PTCL's premium Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) service, continues to show tremendous growth with the highest Net adds share within the FTTH market (since Dec'23) and now stands as the leading FTTH service provider in Pakistan. This phenomenal growth has been possible through the aggressive expansion of PTCL Flash Fiber and dedicated customer experience throughout the country.

Mobilink Bank registers solid start to year by doubling its revenue in Q1 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's leading digital microfinance institution, Mobilink Bank, has reported a staggering 97% increase in revenue during Q1 2024 compared to the same period last year, marking a powerful start to the year. The Bank's Profit before Tax (PBT) also witnessed 110% growth, said a news release. The substantial increase in the revenue and PBT underscore the Bank's robust financial performance, heightened customer & stakeholder confidence, and the positive momentum within the country's economic

and business environment at the outset of the year. Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and digital services to nearly 160 million customers in six dynamic markets that are home to 7% of world's population. Mobilink Bank champions financial inclusion and works to advance the growth and sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly those owned and run by women. The Bank leverages microfinance and fintech to foster access to finance.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Lt (retd) Saad Bin Asad presides over the meeting of Poultry Farms and Shopkeepers Association.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses signing of a letter of intent between Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

Quetta, Gwadar submerged, roads washed away as stormy rains lash Balochistan

GWADAR (INP): Continuous heavy rains have caused widespread destruction in Balochistan. Quetta and Gwadar submerged and mostly areas lost ground connectivity as roads and highways were washed away on Thursday.

According to the channel, continuous rainfall has been reported in Quetta and Gwadar regions since last night, leading to water entering houses, roads being closed for traffic, and disrupting daily life.

Due to the unprecedented downpour in Gwadar regions, highways also washed away and ground connectivity with Karachi and other Sindh areas was disturbed.

The SP Coastal Highway confirmed that traffic between Gwadar and Karachi has been suspended at Makran Coastal Highway near Princes of Hope as the road has been blocked by flood and other routes were also washed away. In Quetta, it has continued to rain since last night and water entered the houses while highways and linked roads were closed for any traffic.

The downpour also badly affected the areas of Turbat, Panjur, Noshki, Pishin, and Chaman as well. Reportedly, flooding caused roads to wash away in Chaman and rain waters entered into houses.

Intense rainfall in Ziarat, Pasi, Ormara, Jiwani, and Jhal Magsi has led to flash flooding in streams and nullahs.

According to the report, numerous settlements in these areas have been submerged, and the roofs of many houses have collapsed while ground connectivity has also been disrupted in several villages.

Karachi was also affected by the westerly rain system as it experienced downpour in areas like Metrowell and SITE, Orangi Town, and Sher Shah.

In the early morning in Lahore, the weather became pleasant due to rain in different parts of the city.

The Meteorology Department has predicted heavy rains in Sindh and Punjab for the next three days as a spell of rains is expected from April 18 to 21.

As per the met office report, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan will also receive rain during next three days.

Tarar for enhanced collaboration between public, private sector to ensure rapid economic dev.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday stressed the need for enhanced collaboration between the public and private sectors to fast track the process of economic development of the country.

Addressing the First Pakistan Semiconductor Summit, he said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had been set up to attract investment in Pakistan and ensure 'ease of doing business'. He said it was main thrust of the government policy to encourage innovation and investment in the country.

He said that Pakistan, as the fifth largest democracy in the world, was endowed with great natural resources and its biggest resource was its human resource. "We are blessed with a huge population of youth which constitutes 68 per cent of its population". That is a huge potential which we can offer to the world, he added.

He said Pakistan was strategically located at the crossroads of the world which was a source of pride for the nation.

He said that the Government of Pakistan as a policy encouraged innovation and investment in the country which this summit was offering precisely - a collaboration between public and private sector.

He said that the federal cabinet meeting on Wednesday had approved a public-private partnership policy framework to eventually facilitate investment in the country.

He said that the job of the government was not only to regulate but also facilitate investment. He said unfortunately sometimes governments forgot their primary responsibility as a facilitator which hampered the investment.

He said that the government could fulfil this responsibility through collaboration between public and private sector and by ensuring 'ease of doing business'.

He said that Pakistan has been producing 50,000 engineering graduates every year and it has the best engineering universities in the world. "Our engineering graduates are well placed globally but unfortunately we are not able to reap the benefits of the semiconductor industry. It is \$550 billion industry at this moment with the projection of \$1 Trillion by 2030."

Tarar said that Pakistan had great potential to deploy its human resource in this industry.

The minister said that he was proud to inform that Shehbaz Sharif during his stints as chief minister of the Punjab had attached great importance to vocational training and skill development. From day one, the priority of the PML-N was skill development of the youth.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed along with others inaugurating Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR) at Institute of Strategic Studies under the Thematic Focus: 'Reviving the Bandung Spirit of Afro-Asian Solidarity: Pakistan-Africa Relations'.

PM witnesses signing of letter of intent between PMYP, UNICEF

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday witnessed signing of a letter of intent regarding the United Nations Generation Unlimited (GenU) programme between Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

GenU was launched by the Secretary General of the United Nations in 2018 with the aim to empower the youth through education, technical training and entrepreneurship and working towards early education and training.

GenU is planning to start its full operations in Pakistan with an initial investment of 20 million Euros in youth related projects.

Signing the document will help provide equal opportunities to education and training to the youth. GenU and the PM Youth Programme will work together on operational strategic framework in this regard.

Earlier the UNICEF delegation headed by representative of UNICEF in Pakistan Abdullah A Fazil called on the prime minister. Chairman PM Youth Programme Rana Mashhood was also present in the meeting.

The delegation apprised the prime minister about the collaboration between the PM Youth Programme and UNICEF regarding increasing the capacity of the youth in Pakistan.

The prime minister appreciated the steps being taken by UNICEF for the welfare of children all over the world, including Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, and Deputy Speaker Syed Gulam Mustafa Shah, at Parliament House.

All areas cleared thanks to administration: Commissioner, DG PDMA visit different areas of Quetta; review cleanliness situation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prior to President Asif Ali Zardari's address to the Joint Session of Parliament on Thursday, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had an interaction with parliamentarians of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and allied parties.

He went across the National Assembly Hall to exchange greetings, besides shaking hands, with the members of Parliament (MPs), including Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

He said that Pakistan, as the fifth largest democracy in the world, was endowed with great natural resources and its biggest resource was its human resource. "We are blessed with a huge population of youth which constitutes 68 per cent of its population". That is a huge potential which we can offer to the world, he added.

He said that the Government of Pakistan as a policy encouraged innovation and investment in the country which this summit was offering precisely - a collaboration between public and private sector.

He said that the federal cabinet meeting on Wednesday had approved a public-private partnership policy framework to eventually facilitate investment in the country.

He said that the job of the government was not only to regulate but also facilitate investment. He said unfortunately sometimes governments forgot their primary responsibility as a facilitator which hampered the investment.

He said that the government could fulfil this responsibility through collaboration between public and private sector and by ensuring 'ease of doing business'.

He said that Pakistan has been producing 50,000 engineering graduates every year and it has the best engineering universities in the world. "Our engineering graduates are well placed globally but unfortunately we are not able to reap the benefits of the semiconductor industry. It is \$550 billion industry at this moment with the projection of \$1 Trillion by 2030."

Tarar said that Pakistan had great potential to deploy its human resource in this industry.

The minister said that he was proud to inform that Shehbaz Sharif during his stints as chief minister of the Punjab had attached great importance to vocational training and skill development. From day one, the priority of the PML-N was skill development of the youth.

Mushahid launches Pakistan's first think tank on Africa

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's first think tank on Africa, Pakistan-Africa Institute for Development & Research (PAIDAR) was launched at a well attended event at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) here on Thursday.

The think tank is the brain child of Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, introduced the aims and objectives of this new initiative as the founding President of PAIDAR.

The think tank was launched at a Seminar hosted by the ISSI with the theme: "Reviving the Bandung spirit of Afro-Asian solidarity: Pakistan-Africa relations". The guests included a number of ambassadors, especially from African countries as well as scholars, students, dignitaries and think tanks, a news release said.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed noted the launch of PAIDAR coincides with the 69th anniversary of the Bandung conference of Asian and African nations held on April 18, 1955 in Indonesia in which Pakistan participated along with China as well as countries from Africa. He termed Africa as the pivotal player in the resurgence of the Global South with 54 members of the African Union. Referring to Pakistan-Africa relations, Senator Mushahid Hussain said that Pakistan's ties with Africa predate the creation of Pakistan as the Qaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan visited Egypt in 1946 to forge friendly ties with this key African country.

Pakistan, UK ties based on mutual respect: Speaker

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday said that Pakistan attached great importance to its longstanding relations with the United Kingdom (UK) which were based on mutual respect and shared perceptions on broad range of regional and international issues.

It is high time to further solidify this cordial bond through increased people-to-people interactions, enhanced parliamentary engagements, and bolstered economic ties for the mutual benefit of the two friendly countries, he expressed these views while talking to the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, who called on him. Highlighting the significance of parliamentary cooperation, Speaker Sadiq underscored that parliamentary diplomacy had historically played a pivotal role in strengthening bilateral relations.

He emphasized the continuous exchange and collaboration between the two parliaments through parliamentary friendship groups.

PM exchange greetings with MPs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prior to President Asif Ali Zardari's address to the Joint Session of Parliament on Thursday, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had an interaction with parliamentarians of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and allied parties.

He went across the National Assembly Hall to exchange greetings, besides shaking hands, with the members of Parliament (MPs), including Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

World Bank demands tax reforms from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The World Bank has put forth major demands for tax reforms from the Pakistani government and eliminating the exemptions on duties and sales tax.

The World Bank released its report on Pakistan and suggested the government of the urgent need for tax system reforms and the elimination of sales tax exemptions to promote economic and social improvement.

The report calls upon the government of Pakistan to establish a national policy for the child development and advocates for reducing subsidies on energy and other commodities.

Opposition's protest amid President's address taints Parl. norms: Raisani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Youngest Member of the National Assembly (MNA) and Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP-Balochistan) Nawabzada Mir Jamal Khan Raisani on Thursday said the Opposition's protest during the President's address to the joint sitting of Parliament tainted the parliamentary norms of the country that brought bad name to the country before foreign dignitaries who were attending the special session as guests.

Raisani praised President Asif Ali Zardari for his constructive address to the joint session of the Parliament which was a good start.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting at NADRA Headquarters.

Ambassador Jiang says Chinese workers will continue contribution to Pakistan's socio-economic development

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chinese staff and workers at different CPEC-related projects will continue contribution to Pakistan's socio-economic development with same spirit and zeal, said Jiang Zaidong, the Ambassador of China to Pakistan.

In an interview with private TV channel on Thursday, the Ambassador expressed his satisfaction that the high-level inquiry initiated by the government of Pakistan into recent terrorist attack in which five Chinese personnel were killed was progressing smoothly, hoping that it will pave the way safeguarding the safety of the CPEC-projects and the Chinese workers.

He noted that the incident was widely condemned by all sections both at the government and the public level. Following this tragic mishap, the government and the security agencies took immediate steps to expose the culprits and bring them to book.

His government, the Ambassador said is willing to work with Pakistani security agencies to achieve the security objectives. To ensure, consistent progress of CPEC, the government will have to ensure the safety of those who are engaged in the development work at various locations of the country.

Ambassador Jiang congratulating the new government in Pakistan said that it showed its seriousness in maintaining the depth of Sino-Pak decades old strategic partnership.

Govt, security forces launch anti-narcotics operation across country

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Govt of Pakistan, in collaboration with security forces, has initiated an anti-narcotics operation aimed at curbing drug trafficking and apprehending offenders.

During the course of this operation, authorities have seized a very large quantity of narcotics totaling 1,024,399 kg from various regions across the country.

Additionally, a total of 1,244 drug dealers have been arrested, signaling a significant blow to the illegal drug trade.

Recent figures from April 7th to 14th reveal notable seizures in different provinces.



QUETTA: Commissioner & Administrator Quetta Hamza Shafiqat and Director General PDMA Jahanzaib Khan visiting city during rain.

PTI announces to support PkMAP's candidates in bye-elections of PB-50 & 51

ISLAMABAD (APP): A woman was killed and another man sustained critical injuries in a gas leak incident, the police said on Thursday.

They said that victims, residents of Akhtarabad area of the provincial capital, were brought to hospital after they suffered injuries as a result of gas explosion.

Later, the woman succumbed to injuries.

The police registered case and started investigation.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to support the candidates of Pashtoonkhw Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) in the bye-elections taking place on the Provincial Assembly's constituencies of PB-50 and PB-51.

This was announced by the provincial president of PTI Balochistan, Dawood Shah Kakar while addressing joint press conference with the senior leader of leader of PkMAP, Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal here at the Quetta press club on Thursday.

The provincial president of PTI said that the bye-elections are going to be held on PB-50 and 51, and the PTI would support candidates of PkMAP in the by-elections.

Speaking on the occasion, the PkMAP's Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal thanked the leadership of PTI and especially Qaidi No. 804 for supporting the party's candidates in the by-elections.

Ziaratwal announced that Mir Wais and Abaseen Khan are our candidates in the by-elections of PB-50 (Killa Abdullah) and PB-51 (Chaman) respectively.

The PkMAP's senior leader said that the country is passing through critical time and there's a political instability in the country.



QUETTA: Deputy Controller Station Director Radio Pakistan Aneesur Rehman meeting with Director General Public Relations Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetran. Deputy Controller Radio Pakistan Siddiq Khan and Senior Producer Saleem Khan are also present.

Iranian envoy for making Pak-Iran border a 'commercial gateway'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iran's Ambassador in Pakistan Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam on Thursday proposed transforming the Pakistan-Iran border into a 'commercial gateway' in a bid to strengthen trade ties between the two countries.

Ambassador Moghadam suggested expanding border markets and opening new crossing points to facilitate trade.

Talking to a private news channel, he expressed optimism about furthering Pak-Iran bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

He said strides had been made in enhancing economic, commercial, and cultural ties between the two nations.

Ambassador Moghadam said that although Pakistan-Iran relations witnessed an improvement in recent years, there remained a significant untapped potential for deeper collaboration.

He underscored the need to elevate the trade volume between the two countries from the current \$2.8 billion to a target range of \$10 to \$25 billion.



QUETTA: Balochistan National Party (BNP) Senior Vice President, Sajid Tarin addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.