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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari address to the joint session of parliament Speaker of National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq presideng 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): Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the joint should be treated as equal 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

"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

sitting was attended by members of the National Assembly and Senate, while in the galleries were

Article 56 (3) of the Constitution which marked the the polarisation so combeginning of the first par- mon now to contemporary liamentary year, following politics," he remarked and 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

before the law.

As a new beginning, he said, the country needed to build its strengths by inprovincial chief ministers and legislators, diplomats, vesting in people, focusing on public needs, and harand representatives from nessing its resources to crepolitical parties.

The president's address was in pursuance of Article 56 (2) of the Company of needs us to move on from sought the role of two Houses of the Parliament in rebuilding public confidence in the parliamentary pro-

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

President Zardari said that by embracing the visions of the great leaders

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Shaheed policies that execute tan-Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, "we can effectively tackle challenges and foster an atmosphere of

mutual respect and politi-cal 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 work-

ing 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.

gible 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 "This is absolutely essential for promoting an inforeign exchange, he added."

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

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 proce-

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 highlevel Saudi delegation that would usher new era of Saudi investment in Paki-

stan, 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 partner-

ship.
The prime minister instructed the authorities concerned to engage worldclass 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 welcoming 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.

Minister Prime 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

QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over a meeting regarding prepa

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has stated that the provincial government is fully ready to conduct repolling and by-elections in different districts of the

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

The Chief Secretary cooperate with the district Pirkani.

The Chief Secretary about the re-polling and by-elections in different Those who were

included Provincial Election Commissioner Muhammad Farid Afridi, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem and Secretary Local Government, Noor Ahmed

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.

Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Metin Gürak met Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir in Rawalpindi on Thurs-

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

edged 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

Both sides acknowl- 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 wellpresented 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 hey would take oath of their offices.

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

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

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Min ister 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 Jameet 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.

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

Independent Report

stated that the President all the resources. Asif Ali Zardari has provided comprehensive President Zardari has exroadmap to all political parties for resolving the public issues through com-

bined platform. stated so in a statement is- sented comprehensive sued here on Thursday strategy for resolving the marking address of the challenges being faced at 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 then he had made historic decisions making parliament empowered.

Sarfraz Bugti said that would take all provinces

He said that the coun-QUETTA: The Chief Min- try can't afford any chaos ister Balochistan, Mir and we have to serve the Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has masses a lot by mobilizing

In this regard, the pressed his vision for development and reconstruction of the country, Chief Minister said adding that The Chief Minister the president has also prethe internal and external

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 parlia-

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

He said that PPP the President is symbol of would continue to serve a strong federation and he the masses as per its mani-



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

Muhammad Munir Afsar welcomed Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on his arrival at the National Database and Registration Authority Headquarters. Federal Interior Minis-

ter Mohsin Naqvi also presided over an important meeting at NADRA headquarters. During meeting Mohsin Naqvi directed that SIM cards issued on ineffective and expired identity cards should be closed as soon as possible. The death certificate

fee is being abolished for the convenience of the people, Mohsin Naqvi said.

He said that the establishment of model police stations in Punjab improved the image of the public along with conve-



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

who is currently in Wash

ington, initiated discussion

with the IMF for a new

multibillion-dollar loan

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

Monitoring Desk tional 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 ender's Middle East and Central Asia director said on Thursday.

tant 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 Meet-

The statement comes as Foreign Minister AFP in Washington earlier Muhammad Aurangzeb, this week.

agreement to support its economic programme. Pakistan is nearing the end of a nine-month, \$3-bil-lion 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

PTI declares CJP responsible for harassment of judges

ISLAMABAD (Online): cases in the light of law 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 spokes-

person 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 po-

litically victimized PTI

leaders and workers when-

instead of taking dictation from secret agents of state are targeted. The judges 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 deci sive 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 haever insist on deciding the rassment

Badar Shahbaz appointed PM's media coordinator

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister Prime 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 Cabi-

net 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 Shabaz had also served as coordinator to the prime minister during the previous 16-month government led by Shehbaz Sharif.

ration for bye polls in different districts

province.

polling stations. urged the political parties and election candidates to administration in this regard so as to conduct the elections and repolling in peaceful and transparent manner.

was chairing meeting held to review arrangements constituencies here on Thursday.

esent in the meeting were

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IMF's projections

The next few years are likely to see Pakistan trapped in lowgrowth mode. International lenders maintain that economic growth in the country will remain subdued, hovering in the range of 1.8pc-3.5pc in the medium term because of plummeting investment, persisting fiscal and external imbalances, and a large state presence in the economy.

In its flagship World Economic Outlook 2024, released on the eve of the spring meetings of the World Bank Group, the IMF has predicted Pakistan's economy will grow by 2pc this year and 3.5pc in the next. The estimates are based on the Fund's recently concluded review of Pakistan's macroeconomic position under the \$3bn Stand-by Arrangement. Even these projections hinge on continued fiscal consolidation and a new IMF bailout. No wonder Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is in Washington to lobby for a larger, three-year Fund programme of \$6bn-8bn to support planned economic reforms.

As stated by him, the country will request a three-year programme "to help execute the structural reform agenda". Referring to reduced market volatility and economic stabilisation achieved under the SBA, he ing the ties between Pakisaid that market sentiment was more positive in the current fiscal year. "It's really for that purpose that we have initiated the discussion with the Fund to get into a larger and an extended programme," he explained. If approved, it will be clear in all his public engagements was the urgent Pakistan's 24th engagement Pakistan's 24th engagement with the IMF since 1958. Will as soon as the ongoing this new programme break Stand-by Arrangement ended. He also made clear what the minister was reported that talks on this had bethat talks on this had bethat some in government shape of the Saudi 'investment package' that we are to have referred to as the "chain of financial struggles and bailouts"? The fact is that Pakistan has never been able to complete a longer programme with the Fund because of a breach in policy goals thanks to political reasons. What will be different this time around? So far, the minister has shown an understanding of the issues that have dragged the economy down and D.C. Three years later, in his commitment to implementing long-delayed structural reforms without any proviso.

"If we do not go through the structural reforms, unfortunately, we will still be looking at another programme," he told an Atlantic Council meeting. He stan has remained a poor supplicant and the richer knows what needs to be done two, patrons of the last reand said that Pakistan does not require "too many policy prescriptions". The problems are well-known and the country is aware of what is needed to stabilise the economy. The challenge is follow-through and occur-red in the 1970s during the Richard Nixon vs implementation.

Unlike his predecessors, Mr Aurangzeb intends to discuss the programme's "growth aspects" with the IMF as well. But he has not elaborated on how It is said that he funded the he plans to grow the economy 1974 Second Islamic Sumwithout breaching programme policy steps that must focus on tough stabilisation reforms.

With the economy going through its worst crisis, the budget for next year is set to reveal how steadfast the government will be in its commitment to undertaking reforms, and how Mr Aurangzeb balances stabilisation with relatively faster growth.

Curious case of Priya Kumari

Shahab Usto

It was on Ashura, Aug 19, 2021, when nine-year-old Priya Kumari went missing. Just before her disappearance or abduction she had been happily helping her father — a syncretic Hindu who runs a sabeel every year in Muharram in San--grar, a small town near Sukkur — serve sherbet to thirsty mourners. It is a curious case. For one, she disappeared' from a place that was thro--nged with hundreds of people, and yet, reportedly, the police found little by way of evidence or even a witness. And for another, her tragedy touches upon every element that has rent apart society, ie, faith, gender, class, and abuse.

Faith: Priya, a Hindu girl, was targeted when she was engaged in religio-cultural services for Muslims. She symbolised a tolerant tradition that goes back centuries, ie, peaceful cohabitation of various communities in Sindh, and beyond. In defiance of an obscurantist mindset that has spawned violence against religious minorities, she and her father transcended

victimhood, therefore, not only exposes a corroded criminal justice system, but goes deeper into the conceptual recesses of a state caught between two conflicting philosophies. The state can either be viewed in terms of a benevolent democracy that accords equality before the law, and grants freedom of worship to every citizen, regardless of colour or creed. Or it can be seen as an ideological tool cast in the mould of a particular policy strand. Priya and many other individuals, groups and communities come under the latter. Gender: Priya's trag-

edy shows the threat to 'gender justice', which envisages the systemic removal of inequalities between men and women in both law and practice. She is among the countless children and women who are targeted for their gender, in different forms and to varying degrees. Thus, many of the better educated and more aware urban women are less vulnerable to extreme forms of gender crimes, though they may also face incidents of violence, abuse, or harassment. But the hotbeds of gender-

faith-driven fault lines. Her based crimes are largely located in the rural and tribal areas where a combination of feudal, tribal, and obscurantist elements continue to regulate rural life, aided by an ineffectual or complicit state machinery

> Even here, the ratio of gender-based crimes forced marriages, 'honour' killing, domestic violence, kidnapping for ransom, etc - is relatively higher among the half-literate and

poorer sections. Clearly, the state has been criminally negligent in enforcing the rights of these hapless women — largely on account of the substantial influence that the local feudal-tribal patriarchy exercises over social policy and governance. But can the state flout local and international laws — particularly the Convention on the Elimi-nation of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women that obligates states to protect women's rights - just to appease its local surrogates?

Člass: Priya's plight also highlights the social angle of crimes against women. She comes from a poor family and is possessed of all the vulnerabili-

disempowerment. Statistically, a majority of sexually victimised children come from poorer and underprivileged classes. Perhaps the offenders are emboldened both by the victim's incapacity to bring them to justice, and the state's routinely tepid response. As a result, these 'ordinary' cases are left undetected, or

invariably 'settled'. Recently, we saw two instances of our lame-duck criminal justice system. In 2021, Nazim Jokhio, a wildlife activist, was brutally murdered near Thatta when he tried to stop the hunting of protected birds. His was, as they say, an open-andshut case. But the powerful offenders were 'pardoned' by the victim's family out of desperation and helplessness. In August last year, Fatima Fariro, a nine-year-old maid, died in mysterious circumstances in Ranipur, located near Khairpur. The investigation report (including the video footage of the crime scene) has attributed the cause of her death to the abuse and torture allegedly committed by her employer, an influential pir. But the prosecuties that accompany indi- tion remains to be con-

cluded, despite the lapse of many months. It is feared that the delay, even if not intentional, will be used to settle the matter out of

Abuse: Priya's case

pertains to 'disappearance' or 'abduction', but abuse cannot be excluded. Child abuse is on the rise. Of the 2,227 abuse victims reported in 2023, more than half (54 per cent) were girls. Let's not forget that children, like women, enjoy multiple protections under general, special, and international laws. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular requires the state to ensure the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. But it is unfortunate that child abuse, like forced disappearances, is rampant and neglected — more so if the victim comes from a poorer background. In fact, most successfully prosecuted cases are those vigorously pursued by the victim's family; otherwise, they end up in the amnesiac entrails of our criminal

Priya is lucky that the media, civil society and political activists have kept

justice system.

her case alive. Recently, the government constituted another JIT under public pressure. But will the new JIT bear fruit in terms of recovering her and ensuring justice for her? The answer hinges on many variables, including the victimfamily's perseverance, the investigator's diligence, the suspect's clout, the prosecutors' capacity, and more importantly, the court's willingness to decide the matter expeditiously and

In a curious way, Priya's unexplained disappearance, Fatima's unending prosecution, and the 'pardoning' of offenders by Nazim's family reflect respectively the incapacity, dysfunctionality, and discomfiture of the entire criminal justice system -the law, police, investigation, prosecution, and adjudication. Ergo, a perception is gaining ground that our legal order has lost its effectiveness, hence, legitimacy. Desperate people are taking the law into their own hands. 'Mob justice' and vigilantism are on the rise. Which raises the critical question: can a state see stability and advancement without an effective and legitimate legal order?

Shifting gears

Khurram Husain

After many years of exreme uncertainty and political instability, it now seems like things are finally starting to move.

Two developments this week point to this. First is the visit of the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia, during which the talks seem to have focused in significant measure on some form of economic engagement etween Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The language used by the Saudi foreign minister at the joint presser at the conclusion of the visit was also unusually bullish on the prospects of growstan and Saudi Arabia.

The second developnent is Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb's round of engagements in Washington, D.C., where he is attending the spring meetings of the IMF and

need for a successor

gun, and outlined three key areas that will be targeted for "structural reforms" taxation, power and stateowned enterprises. His emphasis was on execution, indicating that he will press hard on the matters he com-

These are two very critical developments, although how far they are beneficial for the general populace remains an open question. For now, it is clear that the storms of uncertainty and the perilous brushes with default that have marked the preceding two years are now receding. This does not mean the country is in the clear. Any country that is busy negotiating a programme with the IMF cannot be described as being in the clear.

What it means is that sanity is returning, decision-making is beginning to articulate itself at the top, the correct priorities are being talked about by people who have clout and One thing he made credibility within their own circle of peers, and foreign investors are beginning to look again at Pakistan's prospects. In short, it means the gears are shift-

the temptation to declare victory. It is entirely premature for that at this point, and it is important to bear in mind that a country that is struggling to enter a longterm IMF programme cannot be described as a country that is in good health, or one whose authorities have much reason to celebrate. It means the bulk of the hard work lies ahead, and that the chances of fail-

ure are legion. The finance minister said during one of his interviews in Washington that everyone knows what all needs to be done. The problem is in execution. He should have been asked what prevented preceding governments from executing the agenda he is chalking out, and what makes him so sure he will succeed where they failed. Sadly, this question never arose. Perhaps some TV anchors at home will pose this question to him upon his return.

But for now, without popping any corks or fuelling undue optimism, it is possible to say that a direction is becoming visible. Three questions now arise.

What exactly is the

are succumbing to. This is told totals \$5 billion? How far will the Saudi or perhaps more broadly, the Gulf interest in Pakistan go? And most importantly, will all this really be beneficial for

Pakistan'i Or are we simply going to repeat an old story where the government of the day fetches dollars from abroad, whether borrowed or begged, and burns them in the furnace of the country's economic dysfunctions to produce a short-lived, feel-good, growth experience followed a massive crash?

Twice we have repeated this story. First during the Pervez Musharraf years, and second in the years running from 2013 to 2017, when the third PML-N government of Nawaz Sharif ran the country. The problem is in execution. He should have been asked what prevented preceding governments from executing the agenda he is chalking out, and what makes him so sure he will succeed where they failed. Both these periods were unique in one sense: the country was on an IMF programme, yet it registered high rates of economic growth. These are two an-

tithetical outcomes. Fund

slow the economy to allow it to build reserves and fiscal buffers, while undertaking deeper reforms. What happened in

both these periods was that geopolitics trumped economics. The problem is in execution. He should have been asked what prevented preceding governments from executing the agenda he is chalking out, and what makes him so sure he will succeed where they failed. In the first period, it was the post-9/11 bonanza and its associated inflows that were used to power an economic boom, with which a dictator struggling to find

his feet procured his legiti-

In the second period, an elected government borrowed heavily from bilateral donors, especially China and the Gulf monarchies, to power a growth boom that clearly could not last, and whose bills would weigh heavily on the country for years thereafter, economy's potential. He is but nevertheless gave the right to place the emphasis government of the time on execution, rather than enough material with endlessly discussing policy which to portray itself as the party of growth and most important constitudevelopment

story not be repeated one own cabinet members.

programmes are designed to more time. The temptation to see the dollar inflows that may perhaps be materialising soon (there is as yet no guarantee that this will happen, but the indications are there) as fuel for a short-lived growth boom must be resisted. It should be the success of the underlying reforms, especially the extent to which they enable investment, whether foreign or domestic, that should be the driver of the growth to come

A liquidity-fuelled boom could well break the Imran Khan fever that has gripped the electorate and weighs so heavily on the shoulders of the current rulers. But this will be much the same folly as the dictator using a short-lived economic boom to procure for himself an equally short-lived legitimacy.

The finance minister is right to point to the deeper reform agenda as the key to unlocking the options. But it seems the ency that needs to be per-It is critical that this suaded of this may be his

Three to tango

Such generosity did not go

unpunished. King Faisal

was shot four months later

by his US-educated

nephew Faisal bin Musaid

Abdul Aziz dy--na-s--ty

and Pakistan's inextin-

guishable Sharif family

have shown that they en-

joy an almost umbilical re-

lationship. Crown Prince

Moh-ammed bin Salman

has famously called Paki-

stan his second home. To

the Sharif family, Saudi

Arabia is their first haven.

Prince Mohammed bin

Salman visited Pakistan

during the tenure of PM

Imran Khan. Their

bromance appeared to yield

the prospect of \$20 billion

in investments. Deals were

signed, sealed but remained

undelivered. As Napoleon

once advised: "Promise ev-

erything, deliver nothing."

Shehbaz Sharif has received

fresh assurances of finan-

cial support — this time

5bn - from the same

crown prince. During their

recent meeting, the prince

reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's

resolve never to leave

Pakistan's side and ex-

pressed his government's

boundless affection for the

ered Saudi delegation led by

Foreign Minister Prince

Faisal bin Farhan bin

Abdullah to grout that com-

mitment. The composition

of the delegation under-

scored the seriousness of its

mandate. It consisted of the

Saudi ministers of water and

agriculture, of industry and

mineral resources, the

deputy minister of invest-

ment, and senior officials

from its ministry of energy

and the Saudi Fund for

General Investments. It

He sent a high-pow-

Minister

Prime

In 2019, the Crown

More recently, the Bin

F.S. Aijazuddin

It takes three to tango in our part of the world. The US-Pakistan duo and the Saudi-Pakistan pair has become a threesome, choreographed by the US.

In 1950, prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan met US president Harry Truman in Washington, 1953, governor-general Ghulam Muhammad was hosted by King Ibn-e-Saud in Saudi Arabia. Since then, bilateral relationships between Pakistan and these countries, while shifting and erratic, have nevertheless maintained one golden vein of consistency: Paki-

US attitudes towards Pakistan have usually been determined by the policies of its presidents and by State Department mandarins. Occasionally, they would agree to disagree. The most notable occasion William Rogers bouts over contacts with China.

Saudi monarchs as a whole have remained partial towards Pakistan. Among them, the most unconditionally generous was King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz. the mit held in Lahore. He conceded its stage management to PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who acknowledged that concession by renaming Charing Cross as Faisal

Few will be aware that in 1974 King Faisal gave \$100 million to be disbursed to any projects of PM Bhutto's choice. The money went straight into the projects, without deductions for middlemen. Halfofthat—\$50m—was given to the Mirpur Mathelo fertiliser project, which, even though it was not a joint venture, was renamed Pak-Saudi Fertilisers visited Pakistan this week, in the absence of our finance Again, in January

1975, King Faisal gave The Saudis came just when Pakistan genuflects before the IMF for the 24th \$10m for Pakistan's earthquake victims in the Karakorams. (The US pledged only \$25,000.) In 2023, the IMF

agreed to the Stand-by Ar-

rangement of \$3bn. to rescue PM Shehbaz Sharif's government. The Saudis greased the rails with a reclaimable deposit of \$2bn to window-dress Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. This year, on March 13, ahead of the IMF mission's visit to Pak-istan

from March 14 to 18, the finance ministry cheerfully annou-nced that it had "met all targets for successful completion of Two days later, on the 15th, the IMF team ex-

pressed its displeasure over the ministry of finance's announcement "that it had materialised all structural benchmarks, quantitative and indicative targets even prior to scrutinising and completion of the review by the Fund staff".

According to one news report, the IMF review mission "grilled the finance ministry team in the maiden session of the review talks and everyone seemed clueless how to respond". Finance Minister Aurangzeb assured the IMF that "such an episode would never be repeated in

Shakespeare foresaw the IMF's seemingly openended commitment to Pakistan: "'Tis not enough to help the feeble up, but to support them after"

The fate of our application to the IMF will be known very soon, after April 20. The US will decide its next president at year end. Meanwhile, the US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan continue to cavort in a three-party tango. To paraphrase the US singer Melody Gardot, Pakistan, on its own, may be "a bad walker [but] it can dance the

Ali Burhan Mustafa The illicit global drug market, which is valued over \$400 billion, is second only to the counterfeit products market in terms of the world's main crime rackets. Cocaine, heroin, cannabis, and amphetamines are top sellers. Afghanistan leads in opium and heroin production, while Bolivia and Brazil are at the forefront of cocaine production. Mexico is a key player in cannabis and heroin circulation. The US is a leading market, which mainly receives drugs through Mexico. Canada is another market, to a

smaller degree though. The Golden Crescent, which includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, serves as a significant centre for opium and heroin trade, fuelled as it is by regional politics and a legacy of conflict. In Afghanistan, the grip of the Afghan Taliban over key drug-producing regions further complicates the issue. Meanwhile, the international pressure is on Pakistan to escalate its antidrug campaigns.

According to one estimate, just a decade ago, illicit drugs valued at \$30bn flowed through Pakistan from Afghanistan, underscoring serious security threats at both the local and international level. There remains a degree of uncertainty about the effectiveness of current methods to combat drug trafficking, underscoring the urgency for worldwide collaboration and a concentrated effort to address the fundamental reasons and consequences of this deadly activity.

A 2013 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Pakistan's narcotics control authorities revealed that 6.7 million adults had used illicit drugs in the previous year, with cannabis use seen to be most comwide uptick in the use of substances such as cannabis and amphetamines, which coincides with a rise in health emergencies, including hepatitis C and HIV, particularly among individuals who use drugs via syringes. This situation underscores the critical need for widespread public health strategies to adsubstance abuse in the

Pakistan Narcotics Control

Board has been pivotal in

the crackdown against illegal drugs. It joined the interior ministry in 1973 and went through several transformations before emerging as the Anti-Narcotics Force in 1995. In Afghanistan, the grip of the Afghan Taliban over key drug-producing regions further complicates the issue. Meanwhile, the international pressure is on Pakistan to escalate its antidrug campaigns. The ANF aims to stop poppy farming and drug trafficking. Besides prevention and global partnerships, the ANF runs Model Addicts Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres, which have been treating over 14,000 people since 2005 by combining enforcement with rehabilitation.

A recent study has focused on Pakistan's escalating drug overdose emergency, revealing that 700 people die each day due to drug overdose complications. Faced with around 7m regular drug users, 4m of whom favour cannabis and another 2.7m struggling with opioid addiction, Pakistan is grappling with a significant problem. Tackling this issue calls for a unified strategy that includes strict regulation, improved medical training, and a thorough revision of public health initiatives.

Centres for the treatment of drug addiction in

Fighting addiction mon. Additionally, the re- Pakistan face substantial cent World Drug Report of challenges. Both public 2022 points to a world- and private facilities struggle with inadequate infrastructure, a lack of skilled professionals, and weak enforcement of sound management practices. Although we live in the 21st century, Pakistan still has not recognised drug addiction and rehabilitation as an official subspecialty in psychiatry, while the absence of qualidress the alarming level of fied drug addiction psychiatrists, especial--ly when compared to Founded in 1957, the branches like forensic psychiatry, is deeply worrying. Although mental health laws are in place, the lack of specific legislation for overseeing drug addiction treatm-ent and its regulation means the field is not

officially recognised. This situation impedes the development of specialist training and programmes in the coun-

Hospitals and pathology labs in Pakistan seldom conduct important tests such as breathalysers, drug screenings, immunoassays, let alone employ advanced techniques such as GC-MS. In Afghanistan, the grip of the Afghan Taliban over key drug-producing regions further complicates the issue. Meanwhile, the international pressure is on Pakistan to escalate its antidrug campaigns. The country is also severely lacking in facilities for opioid substitution therapy, which incorporates medication. Despite the availabil-

ity of medications that can prevent drug relapse, their usage is uncommon, indicating a hesitation in adopting contemporary and evidence-based approaches to diagnosis and treatment. Pakistan urgently needs a coordinated policy, better healthcare education, strong regulation, and uniform addiction treatment to halt the increasing number of deaths caused by overdose and



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Power Sector. comprehensive plan in the presented.

PM orders for boosting privatization, outsourcing process of power Discos

Sharif on Thursday country. directed the relevant companies (Discos).

meeting regarding power sector here, the prime elements to harm the country's treasury. minister said the assistance of private sector experts and globally accepted models should be taken improve the management affairs of

prepare and present a transmission

ISLAMABAD (APP): next meeting to improve Prime Minister Shehbaz the power system in the

The prime minister authorities to accelerate the said reforms in the power process of privatization sector would help reduce ensure and outsourcing of the the country's circular distribution debt. He also vowed not to allow electricity Chairing a high-level thieves and other

recommendation and measures with respect to prevent the power theft, reorganization of National ent affairs of Transmission and distribution Dispatch Company companies (DISCOs). (NTDC) and new projects
He also directed to of the electricity

The meeting was told time. that Matiari-Rahim yar Khan transmission line and Ghazi Barotha-Faisalabad line will be constructed to transmission Southern part of the

The meeting was further informed that a comprehensive strategy In the meeting, the had been evolved for the reorganization of NTDC to bring reforms in the power transmission system and minimize the government's circular

The prime minister directed to complete all Ehsan Afzal, Salman the reforms' initiatives Ahmed and other within the stipulated concerned officials.

The meeting was attended by the federal ministers Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahad Khan Cheema, Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, Dr Musadik Malik, Abdul Aleem Khan, Ataullah Tarar, Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, former power Muhammad Ali, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jehanzeb Khan, Member of National Assembly Bilal Azhar Kayani, Engineer Qamar ul Islam, Rana

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

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

Independent Report KARACHI: Governor State Bank of Pakistan participants about the effect. (SBP) Jameel Ahmed highlighting country's in substantial improvements macroeconomic outlook markedly, reaching 15.7 in macroeconomic outlook hoped that time bound as a result of a prudent reforms will put the monetary policy, backed economy on the path of adequately by fiscal sustainable economic consolidation and beginning

Governor SBPexpressed 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 consolidation, ease in

He informed the agriculture output and base substantial improvement

Pakistan's achieved over the past year 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 combined impact of monetary tightening, fiscal

ceremony, held at Jammu

MoU signed for

skilled manpower in

AJK: PM lauds initiative

MIRPUR (APP): Azad reducing unemployment in

Jammu Kashmir Prime the region. The signing

Anwar ul Haq Thursday Kashmir House in the

Chaudhry

He emphasized the

importance of talented and

particularly the youth,

leveraging this opportunity

import supplies, improved

'More importantly, core inflation declined percent in March, after persistently staying above 20 percent throughout last year," he added.

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 broad-based, reflecting the stabilization policies, improved agriculture output has contributed to higher food exports.

FPCCI waives off 50% membership fee of women chambers

Independent Report Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) on Thursday announced waiver

membership fee for women

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

The 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



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 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

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

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 IΤ sector, manufacturing, software

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.

and telecommunication

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



filtration plant with petrol pump style water nozzle at Mubarak Pura.

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 International Monetary Fund.

termed signing of a memorandum of Executive Director understanding (MoU) NEVTTC Aamir Jan and NAVTTC as a Chaudhry Farid Ahmed prignificant dayslopment are recent on the occasion. Speaking significant development. present on the occasion. roundtable meeting with Senior Minister Col. (retd) Waqar Ahmad Noor, Bloomberg team in Washington, he said there educated individuals, Minister TEVTA Sardar is no reason for rupee Amir Altaf, Chief Secretary Dawood Muhammad devaluation as Pakistan has for skill development.

The AJK PM highlighted that the MoU

Burich, Chairman NEVTTC Ms. Gulmina Bilal, and other officials solid foreign-exchange reserves, stable currency, rising remittances and steady exports.



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

Zong business revolutionizes digital landscape for CGCMS through recent partnership

Zong Business, Pakistan's leading telecom operator has joined hands with Construction Management Services (CGCMS) to networks, and innovative

Gezhouba seamless

digital solutions to help the

ambitious goals without various sectors including Founded in 1970, generation, infrastructure

China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC) is a estate development, key subsidiary of China encompassing design, Energy Engineering Group construction, investment, Co., Ltd., a prominent and operation services. state-owned enterprise, said a news release issued here on Thursday.

CGGC specializes in architecture, security.

construction, and real

CGCMS' expertise combined with Zong 4G's proficiency in network

SIALKOT: A person filling water in pot at water

SAARC BAZAAR – A way Forward for South Asian Businesses

Independent Report ISLAMABAD/ SAARCBAZAAR: Empowering Trade, Celebrating Diversity WWWSAARCBAZAARCOM,

Fostering Growth, and 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, userfriendly e-commerce portal that bridges traders across the SAARC region, including MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) and entrepreneurs, particularly women who own home-

SAARCBAZAAR is of the SAARC region can strategically positioned to now showcase their capitalize on this growth by fostering regional economic integration and empowering businesses and consumers alike. The poised for a significant

SAARCBAZAAR trade goes beyond commerce by exhibitions within the highlighting the rich cultural heritage and tourist attractions of each SAARC country. Explore the best entrepreneurial of art, cuisine, and history opportunities. For women while conducting business. entrepreneurs, especially channels. "SAARCBAZAAR

products, services, and source materials effortlessly. The platform facilitates connections between SAARC region, projected traders, manufacturers, and by the World Bank to be consumers with just a the world's fastest- click. SAARCBAZAAR growing region in 2024 with serves as an invaluable a 6% output growth, is resource for accessing upto-date economic data,

news, and information on events SAARC region. It is committed to fostering self-employment and

industries, Businesses from all corners those in peri-urban and remote areas, the platform provides a level playing field to showcase their talents and products. Businesses registered with commerce chambers and women entrepreneurs receive distinctive identity badges. This spotlight feature enhances visibility and credibility, promoting trust

among consumers. SAARCBAZAAR proudly pioneers a firstof-its-kind reporting mechanism for NTMs and NTBs. An open database system ensures prompt resolution of potential trade issues through formal

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 Mushtaq, Project Coordinator, SAARCBAZAAR

A b o u t 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 crosscultural exchange within the SAARC region.

KP Govt decides to establish Gem Processing & Export Centre

Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The its first female president government of Khyber soon followed by other Pakhtunkhwa has decided chambers across the to develop gemstone sector

country. The facilitation centers for women homebased workers would be established in all the provincial capitals.

ICCI pledges to

have a female

president soon

ISLAMABAD (APP):

(ICCI) has pledged to have

This was disclosed by the Chairperson National Commission on the Status Women (NCSW) Nilofer Bukhtiar during the Eid Milan and Award Ceremony held here

Thursday.

On this occasion, Lansana Wonneh, 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

He emphasized that individuals, societies and nations thrive when women are empowered to overcome economic barriers.

PSX loses 43 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday lost 43.20 points, a slight negative change of 0.06 percent, closing at 70,290.12 points against 70,333.32 points the previous trading day.

A total of 440,314,409 shares valuing Rs.24.362 billion were traded during the day as compared to 442,096,653 shares valuing Rs.16.034 billion the last day.Some 359 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 166 of them recorded gains and 174 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 19 remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Cnergyico PK with 33,241,232 shares at Rs.4.55 per share, K-Electric Limited with 29,877,440 shares with Rs.4.43 per share and Pak Refinery with 28,448,438 shares at Rs.29.27 per share. Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.81.10 per share price, closing at Rs.8,380.10, whereas the runner-up was Hallmark Company Limited with a Rs.52.00 rise in its per share price Rs.748.00.Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.52.50 per

share closing Rs.7,547.50.

and Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordhir in the

Besides, Secretary Industries, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah and Special as formal export sector and Secretary Muhammad Anwar Khan, Chief for this purpose the gemstone cluster at Namak Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mandi would be develop in the shape of Gems Processing & Export Economic Development The Gem Export
Center will be redesigned

Management Company (KP-EZDMC) Javed Iqbal Khattak, Executive Director of Federal Export Executive Development Fund (EDF) Samiullah Khan and Director Zafar, PDA and Government Local Thursday in the committee Officers, representatives room of the Industries of Sarhad Chamber of Department here at Civil Commerce & Industry (SCCI) Special Assistant to Chief Association and officers of Minister Khyber other relevant departments also attended the meeting.

PTCL posts 14 % revenue growth

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication

and shifted to a spacious

and suitable building

equipped with all international standards.

Secretariat, Peshawar with

In this regard, a highlevel meeting was held on

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. PTČL continued its

which is 13% higher than last year, mainly driven by growth in fixed line and business segments, said a news

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 strong performance expansion of PTCL Flash throughout Q1, 2024 and Fiber and dedicated achieved revenue of Rs 26 customer experience

billion for this quarter, 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 Bank's robust financial performance, heightened customer & stakeholder and run by women. 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 increase in the revenue and sustainability of micro, PBT underscore the small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). particularly those owned

> 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 singing 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

Turbat, Panjgur, Noshki,

Pishin, and Chaman as well.

Reportedly, flooding

caused roads to wash away

in Chaman and rain waters

Ziarat, Pasni, Ormara,

Jiwani, and Jhal Magsi has

led to flash flooding in

port, numerous settlements

Intense rainfall in

According to the re-

entered into houses.

streams and nullahs.

any traffic.

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 sus- submerged, and the roofs of

pended at Makran Coastal many houses have col-Highway near Princes of lapsed while ground connectivity has also been dis-Hope as the road has been blocked by flood and other rupted in several villages. Karachi was also afroutes were also washed away. In Quetta, it has con-

fected by the westerly rain tinued to rain since last system as it experienced night and water entered the downpour in areas like houses while highways and Metrowell and SITE, linked roads were closed for Orangi Town, and Sher The downpour also In the early morning in badly affected the areas of

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

report, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan will also receive rain during next

Pakistan, UK ties based on mutual respect: Speaker

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 groups.

friendly countries, he ex pressed these views while talking to the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, who called on him. Highlighting the significance of parliamentary cooperation, Speaker Sadio 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 parmamentary

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 par-

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



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting at NADRA

public level. Following this

tragic mishap, the govern-

ment and the security agen-

cies took immediate steps

to expose the culprits and

Ambassador said is willing

to work with Pakistani se-

curity agencies to achieve

the security objectives. To

ensure, consistent progress

of CPEC, the government

will have to ensure the

safety of those who are en-

gaged in the development

work at various locations of

congratulating the new gov-

ernment in Pakistan said

that it showed its serious-

ness in maintaining the

depth of Sino-Pak decades

Ambassador Jiang

the country.

His government, the

bring them to book.

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

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chi-demned by all sections both nese staff and workers at at the government and the different CPE-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 Chi-

He noted that the incident was widely con- old strategic partnership.



Senior Vice President, Sajid Tarin Advocate addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

Govt, security forces launch anti-narcotics operation

across country ISLAMABAD (INP): The Govt of Pakistan, in collaboration with security

forces, has initiated an antinarcotics operation aimed at curbing drug trafficking and apprehending offend-During the course of

have seized a very large quantity of narcotics totalng 1,024,399 kg from various regions across the coun-Additionally, a total of 1,244 drug dealers have

this operation, authorities

significant blow to the illegal drug trade. Recent figures from April 7th to 14th reveal notable seizures in differ-

been arrested, signaling a

ent provinces. Gas leak claims life in Quetta

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

They said that vicresidents Akhtarabad area of the provincial capital, were brought to hospital after they suffered injuries as a result of gas explosion. Later, the woman suc-

cumbed to injuries. The police registered case and started investiga-

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 coun-

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 He said that the fed-

eral 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 npered the investment.

He said that the government could fulfil this re-

sponsibility through collaboration between public and private sector and by ensuring 'ease of doing busi

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 place globally but unfortunatel we are not able to reap th benefits of the semiconduc tor industry. It is \$ 550 bil lion 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 voca tional training and skill development. From day one, the priority of the PML-N was skill development of the youth



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 Ghulam Mustafa Shah, at Parliament House.

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

Independent Report QUETTA: The Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat and Director General, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA),

Jahanzaib Khan visited different areas of the metropolis and reviewed the post-rain situation of clean-They visited double

road, Jinnah road, Airport road, Liaquat bazaar, Shahrah-E-Iqbal and other areas saying that all these areas have been cleared from the rain and sewerage

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner said that he has inspected different areas, which have been cleared following the timely steps taken by the administration.

He urged the general public to adopt preventive measures and ensure drainage of rain water from the roofs of their homes. He also asked the

people to contact the control room in case of emergency so as to give timely response. The Commissioner

said that it is our aim to serve the masses for we are all ready. He said that all pos-

sible steps are being taken to provide maximum relief to the people during the rain situation.

World Bank demands tax reforms from Pakistan

World Bank has put forth major demands for tax reforms from the Pakistani government and eliminating the exemptions on duties

The World Bank released its report on Pakistan and suggested the government of the urgent need for tax system reforms and

ISLAMABAD (INP): The the elimination of sales tax exemptions to promote economic and social im-

vement.

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 commodi-



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

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

Independent Report QUETTA: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to support the candidates of Pashtoonkhaw Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) in the bye-elections taking place on the Provincial Assembly's constituencies of PB-50 and

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.

Pakistan to commence Hajj flight operation from May 9

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pa kistan to commence Hajj 2024 operation from May 9 from eight airports of the country.

According to details

the arrangements for the Hajj 2024 flight operation have been completed by the Ministry of Religious Af fairs and Interfaith Harmony.

Four Airlines including Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Saudi Airlines Air Blue and Serene Air will take part in the Hajj operation.

The vaccination of the pilgrims will start on April 30 at the Hajj Camps. As many as 69,500 pilgrims will depart on the spiritual journey under the

government's scheme. Hajj 2024 flight opera-tion will be carried out from Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi Multan, Quetta, Sukkur, Sialkot, Rahim Yar Khan and Faisalabad airports.

Acting Speaker BA slams bid on life of Akhunzada

Independent Report QUETTA: The acting Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Ms Ghazala Gola has strongly condemned the bid of life of leader of Pakistan Peoples Party and its new nominated candidate for National Assembly, Akhunzada Chatan.

In a condemnation statement issued here on Thursday, Ms Ghazala Gola said that the anti state elements are trying to spoil the peaceful situation of the country under preplanned

However, the morale of political workers can't be downed through such cow ardly acts.

The acting Speaker o provincial assembly de-manded of the Khyber Pakhtunkaw Government to provide every possible protection to the masses of

Speaker NA meets Chairman Senate

ISLAMABAD (APP) Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday met with Chair man Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani at Parliament House. The Speaker congratulated Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani on assuming the office of Chairman Senate and expressed his best wishes, said a press release issued by the Senate Secre-



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Sved 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

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

(UNICEF). GenÚ 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

training to the youth. GenU and the PM Youth Programme will work together on operational strategic framework in this re-

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

in the meeting.

The delegation aprised the prime minister about the collaboration between the PM Youth Programme and UNICEF regarding increasing the capacity of the youth in Pa-

The prime minister appreciated the steps being taken by UNICEF for the welfare of children all over Signing the document the world, including Pakiwill help provide equal op- stan.

Mushahid launches Pakistan's first think tank on Africa

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: 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 Sayed, introduced the aims and

President of PAIDAR. The think tank was Asian solidarity: Pakistan-Africa relations". The guests included a number of ambassadors, especially from African countries as to forge friendly ties with this well as scholars, students.

dignitaries and think tanks, a news release said.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed 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 objectives of this new initiative as the founding the pivotal player in the resurgence of the Global South with 54 members of the African Union. Referlaunched at a Seminar ring to Pakistan-Africa re-hosted by the ISSI with the lations, Senator Mushahid theme: "Reviving the Hussain said that Pakistan's Bandung spirit of Afro- ties with Africa predate the creation of Pakistan as the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad

Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pa-

kistan visited Egypt in 1946

key African country.

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 (PPPF-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

sion as guests

The President presented his vision on all the social issues of the country including law and order, rights of Balochistan, construction and development projects which should have been listened by the opposition, the youngest lawmaker from Balochistan said while talking to APP outside the Parliament.

Raisani praised President Asif Ali Zardari for his constructive address to the joint session of the Parliament which was a good attending the special ses-



QUETTA: Deputy Controller Station Director Radio Pakistan Aneesur Rehman meeting with **Director General Public Relations Balochistan** Muhammad Noor Khetran. Deputy Controller Radio Pakistan Siddiqa 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. A m b a s s a d o r Moghadam said that al-

though 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.