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China ready to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan, says Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): China has stressed for implementing a holistic approach to national security in building the Pak-China community with shared future. In an article, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Ambassador Jiang Zaidong said China stands ready to work hand-in-hand with Pakistan to defeat the evil attempt at disrupting our co-operation. He said we are also ready to work with Pakistan to safeguard development with security and to promote security with development.

The Ambassador said we should take the promotion of international security as a support, and further enhance China-Pakistan counter-terrorism and security cooperation. Quoting the President Xi Jinping's vision of Global Security Initiative, he stressed that all countries need to work together in addressing various security challenges for win-win results.

The Ambassador said we stand ready to work with Pakistan in jointly implementing the Global Security Initiative and building a peaceful and secure homeland.

Condemning the 26th March terrorist attack on Chinese workers in Pakistan, he called for taking resolute actions to crack-down on terrorists.

He expressed hope that Pakistani side will speed up the investigation of the incident, find out the truth, and severely punish the perpetrators.

The Ambassador further said we should take economic security as foundation, and continue to promote the building of an upgraded version of CPEC.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level review meeting regarding power sector

PM directs for vital measures to reduce power price per unit for common man

Emphasizes maximising renewable energy utilization, improving transmission system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed for drastic measures including shifting of imported coal-run plants, improvement in power supply system, setting up cost effective and renewable energy plants, and functioning of solar projects to reduce cost of electricity per unit thus benefiting the ordinary people.

The prime minister chaired a high level review meeting regarding the power sector.

The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Attallah Tarar, Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari and Dr Mussadik Malik, former minister Muhammad Ali, Member of the National Assembly Bilal Zaheer Kiyani, Rana Ahsan Afzal, Salman Ahmed and relevant authorities, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister directed for shifting of the coal-run power plants from the imported fuel to local coal, besides improvement in the power supply system. He said that in future, only clean, cost effective and renewable power plants should be set up in the country.

The meeting was apprised of the 600MW solar power project and the prime minister directed for expediting work on the foreign investment in this regard.

The prime minister also asked for proposals for better utilization of the current surplus power generation capacity in industries.

He observed that wheeling price of electricity should be reduced for the industrial consumers so that power supply at reduced price could be made possible, besides for the industrial development and increase in export, grid stations should be installed near big industries.

The process of auction of those power plants of Generation Companies (GENCOs) that were lying dysfunctional and defective should be accelerated, he further directed.

The prime minister said that the government was taking all measures to reduce price of power per unit for the common man whereas to reduce circular debt, reforms in the power sector were being carried out on priority basis.

The meeting was briefed over the existing power generation capability, supply system, government's steps and proposals. It was also apprised of the future power demand and supply.

The meeting was told that by shifting the coal-run plants from the imported fuel would not only save the precious reserves but also would make it possible to reduce power price by Rs 2 per unit for the consumers.



ISLAMABAD: President, Asif Ali Zardari congratulating Aseefa Bhutto Zardari on taking oath as Member of the National Assembly

PTI demands formation of independent commission to probe May 9 incidents

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) General Secretary Omar Ayub has demanded an independent commission for a fair investigation of the May 9 incident.

Speaking to media in Islamabad, Ayub asserted that the cases against the PTI founder and other leaders including Shah Mahmood Qureshi were baseless.

He claimed that the prosecution was avoiding the Nikkah during Iddat case by postponing the case hearing twice today, as the case was bogus.

The opposition leader said he had been demanding formation of an independent commission for investigation and the release of CCTV footage of the May 9 riots incident. He said the cipher case was bogus and the government must acknowledge its retaliation against the PTI founder.

Regarding the letter written by eight Islamabad High Court judges alleging interference in judicial matters, he stated that the letter was a charge-sheet on the system.

Referring to the movement with the support of other allies, he said the purpose of the drive was to protect the sanctity of the constitution and the law.

Aseefa Bhutto takes oath as MNA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, daughter of late former prime minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and sister of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday took oath as a Member of the National Assembly (MNA). Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath to her, who later signed the registration roll.

Aseefa Bhutto was elected unopposed in the by-election in NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad. Her father President Asif Ali Zardari had won the seat in the general election 2024 on February 8 and later vacated it after his election as President of Pakistan.



RAWALPINDI: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud received by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar upon his arrival at Nur Khan Airbase

Eight killed, 12 injured due to rains in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday issued a report on the loss of life and property in the province due to heavy rains during the last three days.

According to preliminary reports, eight people were killed and 12 people were injured. Four children, three men and a woman are among the dead persons, while the injured include four women, six men and two children.

According to the report, a total of 85 houses were damaged due to the collapse of walls and roofs in different districts, of which 15 houses were completely damaged and 70 houses were partially damaged.

Due to heavy rain, life and financial accidents took place in different districts of Dir Upper, Chitral Lower, Swat, Malakand and Bajaur.

ATC extends interim bail of PTI founder in 3 cases

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Monday extended the interim bail of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder in three cases related to May 9 violence, until April 16. The court directed jail authorities to ensure the attendance of the PTI founder through video link at the next hearing, besides seeking arguments from parties.

ATC Judge Arshad Javed conducted the proceedings on the bail petitions of the PTI founder in cases of attacks on Jinnah House, Askari Tower, and the torching of Shadman Police station.

On August 11, 2023, an ATC dismissed the pre-arrest bails of the PTI founder in seven cases over his non-appearance, as he was jailed after conviction in the Toshakhana case.

However, the Lahore High Court set aside the decision of the ATC and restored his bail petitions, while allowing a petition by the PTI founder.

All evidence pointing towards Indian involvement in Lahore gun attack: Naqvi

LAHORE (Agencies): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday indicated that there was evidence of Indian involvement in the Lahore gun attack on Amir Sarfraz Tamba—the man who allegedly killed Indian prisoner Sarabjit Singh in Kot Lakhpat prison in 2013.

Tamba was critically injured in an attack on Sunday, according to police officials. While media reports had initially claimed that he was killed, Lahore Senior Superintendent of Police Operations Syed Ali Raza had clarified that he was alive, although critically injured.

Tamba was at his residence in Lahore's Islampura area when two masked armed men forcefully entered his home in Ganga Street and fired multiple shots.

They fled the scene, leaving the victim in a pool of blood.

He was rushed to a local hospital, where he was being treated.

The interior minister was questioned on Monday about the incident during a press conference at the Federal Investigation Agency's regional office in Lahore and asked to comment on the veracity of the reported Indian involvement.

"India was directly involved in two to four events like this before in assassinations inside Pakistan. The police are still investigating but till now their suspicion is exactly the same as yours," he said in response to a reporter's questions.

"At this time, all evidence is pointing towards them (India), it is inappropriate to say more before the investigation is completed but the pattern [of killings] is almost the same."



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Raza Naqvi talking to media persons in Lahore

Saudi FM arrives on two-day visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): AIBadr, Head of Saudi Special Committee Mohammad Mazzyed Al Towajiri, and senior officials from Ministry of Energy and Saudi Fund for General Investments.

"The visit takes place essentially to expedite follow up on the understanding reached between Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Mohammad bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during their recent meeting in Makkah Al Mukarramah to enhance bilateral economic cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia," the Foreign Office, in an earlier press release, said.

Upon arrival at the airport, the Saudi Foreign Minister was received by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and other senior officials.

The Saudi Foreign Minister is heading a high-level delegation comprising Saudi Minister of Water and Agriculture Eng Abdul Rahman Abdul Mohsen Al-Fadley, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Ibrahim AlKhorayef, Deputy Minister of Investment Badr

Adil Raja stands exposed after losing legal battle in UK court

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Controversial YouTuber Maj @Adil Farooq Raja has been exposed after losing a legal battle in the United Kingdom.

The false narrative he constructed has also been dismantled, with the British High Court rejecting all of his claims that Pakistan is an authoritarian state where the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) controls both the judiciary and the government. He had also alleged that the February 8 general elections in Pakistan were rigged.

High Court Judge Richard Spearman KC dismissed all applications made by the YouTuber, including his request to halt a defamation trial brought against him by former senior military officer Brigadier @Rashid Naseer.

The judge determined that Raja had posted seriously damaging remarks about Naseer in nine social media posts across platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and X [formerly Twitter].

Imposing a penalty on Raja, the court ordered him to pay £5,000 to the now retired brigadier for the dismissed application to halt the defamation trial.

It also instructed him to make an interim payment of £5,000 towards the costs incurred for the failed security for costs application.

Raja attended the court remotely via video-link, accompanied by his lawyer and PTI UK leader Mahtab Anwar Aziz, who also represents PTI activist Shayan Ali.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ahsan Iqbal was briefed by Secretary, IPC Nadeem Irshad Kayani regarding the Ministry's role, progress and key initiatives.

Ahsan stresses to transform sports, tourism scenarios

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ahsan Iqbal on Monday underscored the need to transform country's sports and tourism scenarios to project its true image globally.

Ahsan, who is also Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives was given additional charge of IPC ministry recently.

"I am honoured that the prime minister has entrusted me with this responsibility," he said while talking to media after chairing his first meeting as IPC minister here at Pakistan Sports Board.

He emphasized the significance of the IPC ministry in the field of sports.

"The 18th Amendment does not mean that the federation should neglect the coordination," he said.

Highlighting the importance of national coordination for the development of the country's potential in tourism and sports, he said.

"The establishment of a National Tourism Council is necessary.

Similarly, we will have to make concerted effort to revive the country's sports reputation," he added.

The minister also spoke about Pakistan's performance at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, last year wherein it only claimed three medals.

"Today, Pakistan's name is not prominent in the Asian Games as it used to be in the past.

"We will have to take some serious steps for sports development.

We will have to declare 2025 as the year of sports revival," he asserted.

He highlighted the significant investments made by other countries for hosting prestigious sport events to get recognition and promote themselves.

MQM-P to take up new Sindh governor issue with PM Shehbaz

KARACHI (INP): A delegation of Muttahida Qaumi Movement - Pakistan (MQM-P) will meet with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss replacing Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori with a new one, sources said on Monday.

Sources further said that the MQM-P was interested in bringing a new governor

in place of Tessori, and that, too, from the party. The delegation, sources disclosed, would also put forward some names to the prime minister who could replace Tessori.

Following the meeting, the advice would be sent to President Asif Zardari, they said, adding that the new governor was expected to be announced this week.

Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim takes oath as Acting CJ PHC

PESHAWAR (Online): Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim took oath as Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court in Peshawar today. Senior Judge Justice Ijaz Anwar administered the oath to him.



SUKKUR: Peoples Party (PPP) Senior Leader, Khursheed Shah talking to media persons after case hearing of alleged assets beyond means, outside Accountability Court

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Iran's counterstrike

The Middle East, indeed, the entire international community, was on tenterhooks after Israel struck the consular section of Iran's embassy in Damascus on April 1.

While Tel Aviv has been striking Iranians and their allies in Syria for over a decade, since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, this incident was different, and was seen by Tehran as a declaration of war.

It was the first time Israel hit an official Iranian facility, killing several members of the Sepah-i-Pasdaran, including two senior generals. Tehran's response to this provocation was expected, and it came late on Saturday, in another 'first', as the Islamic Republic rained a barrage of drones and missiles directly on Israel.

From here, it is into the unknown: either diplomacy and de-escalation can kick in and bring the region, and the world, back from the brink. Or a catastrophic conflagration can ensue, resulting in more devastation, bloodshed and global economic misery.

Israel's Western friends — particular the US and many European states — have used sanctimonious adjectives to denounce Tehran's 'reckless' counterstrike, and have reiterated their 'ironclad' commitment to Israel's defence.

The rest of the international community, including UN Security Council members China and Russia, have taken a more measured approach, emphasising de-escalation. Pakistan has also highlighted the need to "stabilise the situation and restore peace". The fact is that Israel, by attacking Iran's diplomatic facilities and violating Syrian airspace, is largely responsible for this dangerous situation. And its recklessness must be reined in.

There was, of course, tremendous domestic pressure on the Iranian government to retaliate, and Tehran appears to have taken the pragmatic route by demonstrating its deterrence capability, while stepping back from all-out war. Iranian officials have said the matter is "concluded", though top generals say if Israel responds, Iran will again hit back.

This is a very dangerous moment for the international community. Instead of mollycoddling Israel, the Western bloc needs to prevent it from taking more provocative steps. If Tel Aviv does take further military action against Iran, then all bets are off, and a full-scale war could be inevitable. The path towards de-escalation is clear. Israel must immediately end the slaughter in Gaza, which is the key driver of the current confrontation in the Middle East.

Moreover, it must cease its roguish acts of targeting sovereign states including Iran, Lebanon and Syria. If the West keeps talking tough, it will embolden Israel and could drag the US and Europe into a shooting war with Iran and its regional allies. This is what Benjamin Netanyahu may actually want, to take the world's attention away from the massacre in Gaza, and to fight Iran to the last American. Deft statesmanship is the need of the hour to prevent a devastating showdown.

Maleeha Lodhi

The global debate over governance continues — what constitutes good governance and how it helps to determine the fate and fortunes of nations.

It is axiomatic that effective governance and competent leadership are what make the difference between successful and unsuccessful states. Economic development, in fact, depends on good governance. And this, in turn, has much to do with the quality of governance institutions, their responsiveness to public needs and people's faith in them.

In an increasingly complex world, governance challenges have become more daunting. New technologies have created unprecedented flows of instant information to heighten the challenge. Technology has empowered citizens and increased their expectations of what governments should deliver. But governments are seen to lack agility in a fast-moving world.

The international debate on governance in the 21st century has produced

a rich body of literature. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this conversation intensified as assessments were made of which countries managed the health crisis better and whether democracies did a more efficient job than authoritarian systems. Fareed Zakaria, in his book *Ten Lessons for the Post-Pandemic World*, argued that while democracies had a better record, it was a "competent, well-functioning, trusted state" and quality of governance that were instrumental in tackling the pandemic effectively.

Similarly, the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama asserted it was not the type of political system that determined capable management but an effective state. In a 2020 essay, he argued the crucial determinant in efficient crisis response is state capacity and trust in government. "What matters in the end is not regime type but whether citizens trust their leaders, and whether those leaders preside over a competent and effective state."

The unsettled post-Covid period saw unprecedented, overlapping chal-

lenges confront countries across the world. This prompted the World Bank to call for reimagining governance. Its *Future of Governance* report (2022) focused attention on the need for governments to tackle unresolved governance problems.

I saw the world at an inflection point due to growing demands, economic headwinds and mistrust, as well as persistence of chronic failures such as the learning crisis and job insecurity. The report called for a new social contract supported by an elite bargain by which elites committed to outcomes to benefit society at large and not just themselves. It proposed a "government of the future" with a clear vision of its role — innovative, trusted, prepared for crisis and responsive to the demands of citizens.

Over the years, the World Bank also advanced the governance debate by its efforts to evaluate and measure the quality of governance of countries. Its worldwide governance indicators represent a compilation of data that captures perceptions of the quality of governance in over 200

countries and territories. They measure six dimensions of governance — voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

In the global rankings based on assessment of these dimensions, Singapore, Finland, Norway and Denmark were among top performers in the 2022 rankings, with Pakistan among the bottom group of countries.

A different contribution to the governance debate was made by an insightful book published some years back titled *Intelligent Governance for the 21st Century: A Middle Way between West and East* by Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels. The authors examined whether there was a need to reimagine government as political systems were not delivering effective governance. They offered a compelling idea that both East and West should learn and adapt from one another to combine "knowledgeable democracy" with "accountable meritocracy".

For the authors, the question was not if Western-style democracy would triumph over rule by a meritocratic Mandarinate rooted in China's ancient "institutional civilisation", or the other way around. Instead, they asked whether a "middle way" between them could be evolved.

By this, they meant finding a balance between meritocracy and democracy, and between authority and freedom to create the most "intelligent form of governance".

They suggested drawing on the 'best practices' from both to evolve hybrid institutional arrangements that fused elements of popular democracy with the Confucian tradition of a learned meritocracy.

But they stressed the need for reform in Western and Eastern political systems alike, as both faced challenges. They argued that polarisation, dysfunction, decay and ideological rigidity afflict governance systems in much of the West. Without reform, electoral democracy anchored in a consumer culture of instant gratification is headed

towards "terminal decline". This is because it prioritises short-term interests, unmitigated by robust deliberative institutions, which have become weaker and unable to pursue the public good. In the US, democracy appears unable to self-correct.

On the other hand, China adopts a long-term governance perspective, can take tough decisions, and robustly implement them. China's operative system is predicated on the meritocratic tradition of learned and experienced elites and reflected in the modern Mandarinate of the Communist Party. This enables it to chart a long-term path, which explains its extraordinary rise. But the Chinese system is also under stress and needs correction because it "lacks accountability" and faces mounting demands from its people for democratic checks on arbitrary authority and cronyism.

This discussion leads the authors to contend that the best attributes of both Eastern and Western systems can help to produce a template of "intelligent governance".

After neoliberalism

Umair Javed

Slowly but surely, the signs of a global political and cultural realignment are becoming apparent. Several commentators trace the origins of this realignment to events of the last two and a half decades — the so-called war on terror and its impact on Muslim societies, the global financial crisis and the concurrent growth in Asian economies, and greater migratory flows, especially to the West.

A number of these varied trends are clubbed together and summarised as the end of neoliberal globalisation. Trade wars between the US and China, the fracturing of peace in Europe, the rise of right-wing nationalist and populist movements, the breakdown of the (admittedly) thin consensus on open borders, and the resurgence of the state as a coordinator of economic activity all show a world quite different to the one envisioned by the Davos crowd in the 1980s and 1990s.

On the economy front, quite a lot has already been written about the decoupling of trade and

the rise of state interventions in the economy, even in the West. Drawing on China's successful implementation of political capitalism — ie, a system where political power of the state is used to fulfil economic goals — even countries generally reluctant to embrace any form of state intervention (such as the US), have switched to some variant of industrial policy, especially in key sectors like battery and green technology and semiconductors. In her recent trip to China, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen suggested, almost ruefully, that the (neoliberal) mantra of free trade championed by her and her predecessors in office had been detrimental to American workers.

These economic shifts will become more apparent as countries across the Global South attempt to catch up using a variety of different interventionist approaches. Selective engagement with the world, rather than an unencumbered embrace, is likely to be the pattern in the years ahead.

However, neoliberal globalisation was not just an economic project. It

came armed with a range of political and cultural ideals whose task was to generate mass consensus, especially among the so-called losers of globalisation.

A primary one was the ideal of liberal democracy, supposedly guaranteed globally by the US. The simple fact, though, is that the commitment to this ideal remained selective at best, contingent on US foreign policy goals. The West was comfortable working with dictatorships of all stripes as long as its interests in a particular region were guaranteed. However, even this superficial consensus seems to be fraying. With the rise of far-right and populist movements in the West, democracy is eroding in its supposed heartlands.

Simultaneously, the (selective) success of autocracies in generating popular support and consensus through economic growth makes them seem an attractive alternative. Regardless of the extremely specific factors that allow some autocracies to generate growth, every aspiring autocrat, such as those frequently found in Pakistan, seems to think that limit-

ing popular representation is a key ingredient in delivering growth.

In an insightful recent exposition, sociologist Cihan Tugal cites the case of Erdogan and Turkey's AKP, which have deftly used targeted state welfare, interventions in the economy and authoritarian politics to create a durable ruling arrangement. These arrangements have proven to be somewhat successful in limiting, though by no means finishing, challenges to its rule over the last two decades.

Finally, the cultural agenda of neoliberalism is also being challenged, both in the West and abroad. This agenda was based on the extremely selective co-optation of ideals of inclusion and representation. It found its clearest manifestation in places like the US, where check-box tokenism became the basic mode of dealing with racial and gender minorities without any actual accompanying reordering of economic and social hierarchies.

The slowdown of economic growth, especially in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, has led to an upsurge of racial, nativist, and chauvinist

politics, which sees even these watered-down efforts of social justice to be an affront that need to be done away with. In a throwback of sorts to the inter-war period of the 20th century, minorities and immigrants are being scapegoated for the unmet aspirations of the majority.

This retreat towards primordial loyalties is also increasingly apparent in migrant communities, especially conservative Muslim ones across the world. The genocidal acts of Israel in Gaza, and the blatant encouragement provided by Western governments, have created a major schism with Muslim communities and dealt another blow to liberal political rhetoric and its talk of multicultural societies. Anecdotally, conversations with Pakistani migrants in the West reveal a range of anxieties; not just with regard to the rise of racial and Islamophobic politics, but also with prevalent modes of gender and sexual politics that are seen to be antithetical to conservative belief systems. This is particularly true for young, first-generation migrants who are raising families in the West.

One outcome of this

is an even further rise in the attractiveness of the Gulf monarchies, especially for high-skilled, high-credentialed Muslim migrants. There is now renewed appeal of greater cultural conformity, alongside the usual economic advantages associated with life abroad. Global transformations rarely reveal themselves in one, clearly distilled moment. Instead, they become apparent through various, drawn-out and slow-moving processes. In the present, these shifts in the global economy, political systems, and cultural values are all important indicators of such a transformation. Some of these shifts may be read as broadly positive. A focus on state-led national economic growth is one such example, which may help fix the inequities created by neoliberalism.

On the other hand, ethnic, cultural and racial insularity, and the ongoing retreat towards such identities can be seen as a more worrying trend. As seen in the past, the biggest fallout of heightened nativism is usually further exclusion and discrimination of gender and racial/ethnic minorities.

Childcare challenge

Huma Yusuf

During a spell of what feels like endless school holidays, a working mother's mind inevitably turns to childcare. When faced with the great juggling act that is work and life, it is not surprising that the West is grappling with declining birthrates and millennials are taking to TikTok in droves to swear off having children. Readers may dismiss working mothers and childcare as a Western problem, but it is increasingly a Pakistani one. The country must tackle it quickly if it is to be an equitable, inclusive and prosperous society.

Admittedly, there has been good news on the childcare front. In her inaugural speech as Punjab Chief Minister, Maryam Nawaz pledged to develop day care centres in workplaces to enable working women. This comes on the back of a spree of day care centre launches in Punjab in recent years, including at police stations. Last year, the then president signed the Day Care Centres Bill, which requires workplaces in Islamabad with more than 70 employees to establish crèches. It has also made news headlines each time a provincial assembly has established a childcare facility, setting a positive precedent.

But these largely symbolic acts amount to little in a country with a female population of 109 million (2021). At 24 per cent, Pakistan's female labour participation rate is among the lowest in the world, and well off our own Vision 2025 target of 45pc. The lack of childcare is a key driver for this low participation: according to a 2019 ILO study, Pakistani women do more than 90pc of unpaid care work.

ing statistic, the impetus to push for adequate childcare for Pakistani women seems more like lip service than a top priority. This highlights the state's short-sightedness, given that female workforce participation is constantly cited as a golden key to unlock Pakistan's economic potential. Indeed, a 2018 IMF study concluded that Pakistan could boost its GDP by 30pc if it closed the gender gap in its workforce.

There are various barriers to additional childcare provision, the key one being the failure to recognise the massive demand for such support. The nostalgic fantasy of joint families, where infants are left in the care of doting grandmothers, persists. In reality, care is provided by elder female siblings or cousins, themselves denied schooling because of childcare obligations, fuelling a vicious cycle of female poverty and marginalisation. Or it's a maid — likely underpaid and underpaid — who herself will struggle with childcare when the time comes to start a family. Improving formal childcare provision for one woman would likely improve the lot of many others. The childcare demand is set to grow exponentially. High inflation means dual-income households, particularly in urban areas, will grow in number. Some of this will hopefully also be spurred by positive pull factors, as more workplaces seek to be gender inclusive.

Pakistan is also likely at a tipping point for female rural-urban migration, and potentially at risk of having its female labour force participation decline if it cannot solve the childcare puzzle. This is because women in rural areas who participate in agricultural activities

are considered employed (leading to a rural-urban discrepancy of 28.9pc against 10.2pc in 2016).

Rural-urban migration has been dominated by men seeking employment or education in cities, with women moving in smaller numbers, largely due to marriage. But as climate change leads to more stress on agricultural production, expect women to migrate in much larger numbers due to economic necessity. With climate migration will come greater demand for childcare, particularly in urban areas, as women leave behind the proverbial village it takes to raise a child. Failure to cater to this demand will worsen the prospects of female labour participation.

The solution is not merely legislative: laws such as the 1934 Factories Act mandate childcare provision by employers after reaching a threshold of female employees. A 2021 IFC/Pakistan Business Council report found that these laws were poorly implemented because of lack of awareness and resources both among enforcement agencies and employers.

This will have to change. But solving for the supply side without addressing valid and material safeguarding concerns will be as good as doing nothing. Given the horrific stories about child abuse that make it to the news with sickening frequency (those are just the cases that are reported), childcare provision will have to be delivered with a complete infrastructure of regulation, monitoring, robust law-enforcement and timely inspections.

We cannot afford to wait. The fate of legions of working women and their children depends on our state prioritising the childcare conundrum.

Criminalising hate

Bina Shah

There is a Stephen Spielberg movie called *Minority Report*, based on a Philip K. Dick science fiction novella set in the year 2054. Tom Cruise plays a police officer who heads a special unit that uses Pre-Cogs, people with psychic powers who can see the future and predict crimes. When Cruise is accused of a crime he is going to commit 36 hours from now, it is merely the vision of a psychic that plunges Cruise into a desperate fight to clear his name and not be killed.

I thought of this film when I read about a new law enacted in Scotland called the Hate Crime and Public Order Act. Hate crime laws had already existed in Scotland; the new law adds more categories to the group of protected minorities: age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or being intersex. It also abolishes the crime of blasphemy, which most developed nations consider to be outdated.

The hate crime law, passed in 2021, came into effect on April 1, 2024. It does not include protections for biological women. Instead, the Scottish government, led by First Minister Humza Yousuf, proposes to enact a separate law criminalising misogyny at a later date. This has caused tremendous controversy, as duelling groups argue that women's rights are being trampled in favour of transgender rights.

Confusingly, it is not meant to "stifle criticism or debate", or even to stop people from "expressing controversial, challenging, or offensive views" (quotes from a Scottish government spokesperson speaking

to CNN). On social media, people are posting controversial statements just to test its boundaries. In the law's first week, police received over 7,000 complaints, of which only 240 were officially recorded, and the rest deemed as false complaints. Described as an "unmitigated disaster", the law is causing more problems than it hoped to solve.

Hate speech laws that get it right must serve as a balance between public safety and order, and the right for people to express themselves freely — hence the classic example, that you can't go into a crowded theatre and shout "Fire!" because of the harmful consequences of that act. Most hate speech laws criminalise speech that incites people to violence and physical harm. The Scottish law takes this even further; if your speech incites hatred, not even actual violence, against a protected group, you are criminally liable.

Hate speech laws engender a debate about what we want our societies to look like, and how we want our citizens to behave versus how much freedom of thought and expression we want them to have. They also attempt to make it mandatory to treat others with respect and dignity.

But you can't truly legislate against hatred as a felt human emotion, any more than you can make it enforceable by law to love against someone's will.

We are trying to legally intervene in the delicate space between emotion, ethics, and action, by acting as a barrier to human beings racing along the signal-free corridor of the amygdala, the part of the brain that generates impulses. Your

pre-frontal cortex, which weighs the consequences of those impulses, may decide that a little hatred in the right time and the right place is actually a good thing, as Aristotle described the relationship between hatred and virtue. But just in case, the Hate Crime Law, with its attendant punishments, is there to guide you to the better choice of keeping your hateful thoughts to yourself.

In George Orwell's dystopian classic 1984, laws against thoughtcrime, or having negative thoughts against the ruling government, was the most extreme type of hate speech law. Thoughtcrimes did not have to be acted upon, nor did they have to cause physical or material harm. Merely a person's beliefs, expressed to another or written in a diary, could bring a citizen of Oceania such as Winston Smith into the reach of the ThinkPol, or thought police, though he avoided the ultimate fate of vaporisation.

But rather than 1984 or the Minority Report, I look at Pakistan as a prime example of hate speech laws gone wrong, where the mere suggestion of sacrilege results in pogroms, desecration, and death before the legal process against it has even begun.

Meanwhile, vulnerable populations — women, khwaja siras and intersex people, the disabled, non-Muslims and minority sects — continue to experience hatred, discrimination and violence freely expressed in thought, words, and action. In Pakistan, this kind of hatred is not banned; instead, it is weaponised. When will we come up with the kind of laws to protect our citizens from that?

Alem Khan says: Increase in exports to help enhance foreign reserves, stabilise economy

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications Abdul Alem Khan on Monday said that increase in exports was imperative for enhancing foreign reserves and stabilising the national economy.

The private sector should come forward and explore different fields to enhance exports, he said during a meeting with businessmen and investors here at the Governor House.

The minister stressed the need to take special measures, especially in view of Pak-Saudi investment and export agreements.

Alem Khan said, "We have to further expand by investing in export sectors which will ultimately create more jobs".

He urged the private sector to find new opportunities to invest domestically and abroad, for which the government would provide them all possible

facilities. The minister welcomed the visit of a high-level delegation from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He expressed the hope that the private sector would take full advantage of the opportunity, which would also boost bilateral trade between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Federal Secretary Commerce Saleh Farooqui briefed the meeting regarding the export situation.

He said that there was a wide scope in the fields of agriculture, textile, information technology, pharmaceuticals, mobiles, sports equipment, minerals and other sectors.

The meeting was attended by important business personalities, investors and leaders of the business community who announced their full support to the present government.

The participants also expressed their commitment that they would fully cooperate with the high-level delegation from Saudi Arabia.



Finance Minister Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb met with US Pakistan Business Council @ USPBC delegation in Washington D.C. Highlighted govt's commitment to improving business climate & attracting foreign & domestic investments in key sectors including agriculture, IT, mining, & energy.



LAHORE: Chicken retailers protesting for their demands in front of the press club in the Provincial Capital.

China allows buffalo embryos import from specific regions of Pakistan

BEIJING (APP): China has allowed specific regions of Pakistan to export buffalo embryos that meet its quarantine requirements.

The latitude and longitude coordinates provided in the recent joint announcement of China General Administration of Customs and Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs correspond to the buffalo epidemic-free ranch of Royal Group in Punjab, Chinese media reported.

This marks the first ranch in Pakistan and the only one in the world capable of exporting high-yield buffalo embryos to China.

As one of the first agricultural projects initiated

under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Royal Group's "Buffalo Breeding Project" has made significant progress.

The importation of buffalo embryos into China can significantly shorten the cycle of improving dairy buffalo breeds from 12 years in the past to three years. Additionally, the milk production of a single buffalo can be increased by more than threefold.

In addition, Royal Group has established an in vitro embryo production factory and pastures in Pakistan.

They have also recruited and trained local researchers and farm managers, and provided high-quality

germplasm resources of milk buffalo to Pakistan. This has helped solve the issue of maintaining the local super buffalo resource.

In 2021, the Royal Group established Royal Cell Biotechnology (Pakistan) and officially launched the "Milk Buffalo Provenance Chip" strategy. In the following year, the Royal Cell in vitro embryo production plant was formally inaugurated. Now, local technicians in Pakistan can produce hundreds of high-quality buffalo embryos in a week. The embryos will breed high-yielding milk buffalo herds and greatly increase buffalo milk production once they are introduced to China.

Steps afoot to cut essential commodities prices: Ch Shafay

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said here Monday that the government under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is making all out efforts to end inflation and dearness, besides reducing the prices of essential commodities after the historic Ramadan package.

The reduction in the prices of wheat bread (Roti/Naan) is a mega step providing relief to the people, he said and added that all the districts administration have also been directed to ensure the implementation of the decision to reduce the

prices of Roti and Naan. The price control committees and other relevant institutions should also play their active role to ensure the sale of Roti at Rs 16 and Naan at Rs 20, he asserted. The Provincial Minister said that measures would be continued to make life easier for the people, citing that welfare schemes are being rapidly promoted across the province.

He vowed that economy would be stabilized by bringing about an industrial revolution in Punjab. "We will increase employment opportunities by bringing new investments," he mentioned.

IMF urges Pakistan to boost revenue via taxing non-essential items including cigarettes

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has been urged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to overhaul its tax machinery through taxing non-essential items including cigarettes to boost revenue and improve public health.

Health advocates have highly appreciated a set of recommendation and taxing non-essential items including cigarettes given by the global lender.

Head of Zaman Research Center at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Prof Muhammad Zaman said, "This is a crucial time for the government to fix economic problems and implement the IMF recommendation."

The IMF report has

referred to a phenomenal study on this subject conducted by Capital Calling, an Islamabad-based think tank, which says the cigarette consumption has decreased due to increase in prices, he added.

Prof Zaman said there was a need to bring into account the cost of morbidity and mortality that smoking inflicts on the society. "Smoking is injurious to health regardless of the cigarette brand," he said.

The head of Zaman Research Center at QAU pointed to critical flaws within Pakistan's tax system particularly the cigarette industry, which have facilitated a loss of Rs567 billion during last seven years, as revealed by the

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

The study further exposed the influence of multinational cigarette companies on policymakers, particularly evident in the introduction of a three-tier excise duty structure in 2017, which prioritized revenue collection over public health considerations. However, subsequent analysis proved this approach to be ineffective and misleading in revenue generation.

The SDPI research highlighting global best practices and how high and middle-income countries have successfully used high cigarette taxes to reduce consumption and boost government revenues.

Visit of Saudi delegation will be a milestone for Pak's economy: Atif

ISLAMABAD: President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Shaikh termed the visit of the Saudi delegation as a milestone for the economy and hoped that it happens in response to the recent visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan's to the capital of the brotherly kingdom. The focus is on a positive continuation of the investment projects in Pakistan. The pledge to complete the five-billion-dollar investment

trail would soon begin restoring the confidence of investors from all over the world.

Atif Sheikh said investment of this denomination from the platform of the SIFC in the Reco Deq prospect was a positive step for the bolstering the economy. The role of the Investment Council is significant and timely, he added. There is a need for a framework to help widen the possibilities of cooperation in different fields of the economy.

Finance Minister meets USPBC delegation in Washington

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday met a delegation of the US Pakistan Business Council (USPBC) in Washington DC to discuss the government's commitment to improving the business climate in the country.

According to a Finance Ministry press release, the minister during the meeting highlighted.



LAHORE: Chairman Kisan Etihad Khalid Hussain Butt addressing a press conference at press club in the Provincial Capital.

Pak poised for economic growth with strong support from S.Arabia: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulama Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Monday said that Pakistan was poised to make economic growth with the strong support of the brotherly country of Saudi Arabia.

He attributed the country's positive economic trajectory to the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, particularly in fostering friendly relations with Islamic nations to bolster investment and business opportunities in Pakistan.

Talking to the media, Ashrafi said a high-level delegation led by Saudi Foreign Minister was expected to arrive in Pakistan on Monday evening, marking a significant milestone in bilateral ties, adding the

visit would underscore the country's appeal as an investment destination among the Muslim states.

The PUC chairman highlighted that both the prime minister and army chief had effectively garnered support and commitments from key stakeholders, including the Saudi leadership and prominent businessmen.

He said concerted efforts made during the last two months to strengthen Pak-Saudi relations, culminated in successful meetings of Pakistan's leadership with top Saudi officials, including Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman and Muslim World League Secretary-General Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa.

Ashrafi said the visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, accompanied by representatives from vital ministries and business sectors.

Pak rupee stable against US dollar in interbank market

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistani rupee stayed on course against the US dollar as business resumed in the interbank market on Monday after long Eid break.

As per the information obtained from the forex dealers, the local currency appreciated by 16 paisas against the greenback and was currently being traded at Rs277.78.

On the last business day before Eid, the Pakistani rupee had remained largely stable against the US dollar, settling at Rs277.93 on Tuesday.

In a key development, Pakistan's economic team led by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb had left for Washington on Sunday to hold talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new bailout programme.

Talks between Pakistan and the IMF are scheduled for this week in Washington, wherein the government team will request the Fund for approval of a new loan programme. The main ministerial meetings and events will be held from April 17-19.



Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications, Abdul Alem Khan presiding over a meeting of business community in Karachi.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): A ship 'Nicholas' with 56,277 tonnes of Coal, berthed at Pakistan International Bulk Terminal on Sunday.

Meanwhile, four more ships, Fast, MSC Nilgun, High Trader and Navigation Vega also arrived at outer-anchorage of Port Qasim during the last 24 hours.

A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them an edible oil carrier 'TTC Vishaka' left the Port today morning while another ship 'Lusail' is expected to sail today.

Cargo volume of 103,652 tonnes, comprising 9,419 tonnes of export cargo carried in 441 Containers was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 8 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Fast, Gall and MSC Nilgun & two more ships, MSC Vilda-X and XT Brightness are scheduled to load/offload Cement, Palm oil, Container and Chemicals are expected to take berths at MW-2, LCT, QICT and EVTL.

Pakistan's regional exports increase 20.57% in 8 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's exports to the seven regional countries witnessed an increase of 20.57 per cent in the first eight months of the financial year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

The country's exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$2,912.102 million, which is 14.17 per cent of Pakistan's overall exports of \$20,537.900 million during July-February (2023-24), State Bank

of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Pakistan carried out its border trade with its farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives.

Pakistan's exports to China witnessed an increase of 42.02 per cent to \$1,895.720 million in eight months of this year from \$1,334.804 million last year while exports to Afghanistan witnessed a nominal decline of 7.68 per cent from

\$346.522 million to \$319.887 million.

The country's exports to Bangladesh also decreased by 19.63 per cent to \$421.939 million this year from \$525.017 whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 32.31 per cent to \$266.164 million from \$201.165.

The exports to India increased to \$0.230 million from \$0.161 million in the previous year.

Exports to Nepal increased by 5.66 per cent to \$2.164 million from 2.048 million while to Maldives increased by 8.11 per cent to \$5.548 million from 5.998 million, it added.

Eid Festival Bazaars to be organized in all markets from next year

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner appreciated the ICCI and the Traders Welfare Associations for organizing Eid Festival Bazaars for the benefit of the consumers. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the Aabpara Market is the oldest market of Islamabad and is playing central role in improving the economy by promoting trade activities and that ICCI will continue to work with relevant government departments to resolve the issues of the business community.

He was also impressed by Capital Development Authority that focused on the beautification of the market.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$13.44 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan reached US\$ 13,441.7 million in the week ended on April 5, 2024 while foreign reserves held by State Bank stood at \$ 8,040.3 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Monday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank decreased by \$0.1 million to \$ 8,040.3 million during the week under review.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were recorded \$ 5,401.4 million, it added.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on March 29, 2024, were \$13,378.9 million.

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 229 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 229.86 points, a positive change of 0.33 percent, closing at 70,544.58 points against 70,314.72 points the previous trading day.

A total of 555,214,972 shares valuing Rs.21.986 billion were traded during the day as compared to 389,396,548 shares valuing Rs.17.273 billion the last day. Some 353 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 180 of them recorded gains and



MULTAN: Labourers are busy in spreading sheep wool for drying at their workplace.

Industry in grip of deep economic crisis amid high marks: SVC FRIA

LAHORE (INP): Senior Vice Chairman (SVC) Ferozpur Road Industrial Association (FRIA), Shahbaz Aslam has said that the country is in the middle of a deep economic crisis amid interest rates hikes and soaring inflation with its major debt sustainability indicators witnessing marked deterioration.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he said that amid the crippling economic crisis, the govt will have to return \$77.5 billion as external debt in the next three years. Quoting the media reports, he noted that a major portion of the \$77.5 billion is owed to China, and has to be paid in June when a \$1 billion Chinese SAFE deposit and a roughly \$1.4 billion Chinese commercial loan would mature.

Shahbaz Aslam stated that the total public debt and liabilities of the country has presently been standing at Rs68 trillion in FY22-23, expressing the fear that it would go up further by Rs11.8 trillion in the current fiscal year.

He pointed out that the total public debt and liabilities would go up manifold mainly because of the rising fiscal deficit and it is estimated that fiscal deficit would escalate by Rs8,227 trillion for the current fiscal year, equivalent to 7.8 percent of GDP. The SVC FRIA said that the government will have to manage budget financing to the tune of Rs7.5 trillion through domestic avenues and only Rs1 trillion would be made available as budgetary support from foreign avenues.



LAHORE: Farmers are busy in harvesting wheat crop near Ravi River.

CM chairs online meeting with Commissioners, DG PDMA: Govt. enforces rain & urban flood emergency in rain affected areas of Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has enforced rain and urban flood emergency in the rain affected areas of the province.

Following the rain and urban flood emergency, leaves of all concerned officers and staff including those serving in the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) have been cancelled, stated the spokesman, Government of Balochistan here. According to the spokesman, the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti chaired online

meeting with all divisional commissioners and high ups of PDMA on late Sunday night.

The Principal Secretary to Chief Minister and Director General PDMA briefed the meeting about overall situation of rains besides relief and rescue activities in the province.

The Chief Minister expressed anguish over the public complaints about the sewerage and sanitation issues in the metropolis.

He said that the government would provide wholehearted support and resources to the field officers

in the rain situation as it is our responsibility to steer the people out of the hardships and miserable situation.

He issued clear directives to the field officers to remove encroachments established on the sewerage nullahs. APP adds: Balochistan government has declared rain and urban flood emergency due to continuous heavy rains which battered different districts of the province, killing and injuring several people across the province, spokesman of the Balochistan government Shahid Rind said on Monday.



QUETTA: Spokesman Government of Balochistan Shahid Rind and MPs Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Mir Liaquat Lehri, Malik Naem Bazai, Bakhar Muhammad Kakar, Mir Samad Khan Gorgage and Ejaz Sanjrani briefed mediapersons about rain situation and government initiatives

Capital embraces normalcy after natives return

ISLAMABAD (APP): The capital city has embraced normalcy, with the majority of natives returning after celebrating the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr in their inbred towns with relatives to join their daily engagements.

After celebrations of Eid-ul-Fitr, following the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan, the natives as well as the locals are now transitioning back to their routines, as significant attendance was observed in the public and private offices and educational institutions.

Although many of the employees and students have resumed their official and academic engagements, respectively, many still couldn't join their daily activities due to tiredness after traveling back from their inbred towns. The majority of the population of Islamabad, comprised of people belonging to different parts of the country who are settled here for job, education, or business purposes, prefers to celebrate the festivals of Eid with

their relatives in their home towns. The three Eid holidays from Wednesday to Friday announced by the government compelled the officials to take leave of Monday and Tuesday to club weekends back and forth with Eid holidays to spend more time with their families. Kamran Khan, a resident of G-8/1, said, "Most of the natives prefer to celebrate the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr in their home towns. Now, the hustle and bustle of the city is reviving after Eid, with its residents coming back from their native towns."

"I managed to get leave of Monday and Tuesday prior to Eid holidays and left for my hometown on Friday, enjoying around ten days with my parents, making this Eid memorable as I would get an opportunity to visit them on Eid," he said while talking to APP.

Muhammad Yar, who is settled in Islamabad due to a government job and only visits his native town occasionally, said, "It is important to bring children to our home town to spend

maximum time with all family members to have a strong bond."

"I wish my children to remain connected with our roots, native language, traditions, and culture so that they can adopt those deep-rooted values that are essential to becoming good humans," he said.

The federal capital wears a deserted look during the Eid festivals as most of the natives move to their home towns to celebrate such festive occasions with their loved ones, while most of the markets and restaurants also remain closed.

The educational institutions in the city have also opened after Eid vacations, and students, after enjoying detailed visits to their home towns, are ready to focus on their academic routine along with sharing details of their Eid celebrations and participating in Eid Milan parties.

"I was excited on the first day of school today after vacations as me and my friends shared stories of our Eid celebrations and had great fun.

E&T Deptt removed 55 tinted glasses, 65 fancy number plates

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Excise and Taxation (E&T) Department on Monday intensified action against illegal vehicle modifications in the Federal Capital and a total of 180 vehicles underwent inspection, leading to the removal of 55 tinted glasses and 65 fancy number plates. Those found in violation were issued warnings, while the registration of vehicles with illegal modifications was suspended.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the Excise Department were ramping up efforts to curb illegal modifications on vehicles and continued crack down on vehicles sporting black tinted glasses and unauthorised fancy number plates, said the ICT Spokesman, Dr Abdullah Tabassum here.

In a recent operation spearheaded by Assistant Commissioners alongside Assistant Excise & Taxation Officers (AETOs) and Traffic Police, thorough checks were conducted at key locations including Lettara Road, Taramuri

Chowk, F-6,

F-7, and nearby areas, he said adding a total of 180 vehicles underwent inspection, leading to the removal of 55 tinted glasses and 65 fancy number plates. Those found in violation were issued warnings, while the registration of vehicles with illegal modifications was suspended.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner urged citizens to comply with the law by removing unauthorised modifications from their vehicles. Only number plates approved by the Excise and Taxation Department should be used to avoid facing punitive measures.

It is noteworthy that the joint operation between the Excise and Taxation Department and the Islamabad Transport Authority is an ongoing effort, indicating a sustained commitment to enforcing regulations and maintaining order on the city's roads.

10 gamblers arrested red handed; cash and gambling tools recovered

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police Sumbal police station team have arrested 10 gamblers and recovered cash and gambling tools from their possession, a public relation officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the Sumbal police team conducted a raid at gambling den and arrested 10 gamblers red handed and recovered cash and gambling tools from their possession. The accused were identified as Nazakat, Waqar Ahmed, Mumtaz Saeed, Zahoor, Naveed Akhtar, Khuram Shahzad, Javed Iqbal, Hazrat Bilal, Masood and Muhammad Shafique.



President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with the Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, in Islamabad

HEC asks young digital artists to showcase their skills in ECO Youth Award

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has asked young digital artist with a knack for rich cultural themes to showcase their talent in digital art for a chance to win the ECO Youth Award with a \$1000 cash prize.

According to the details, the ECO Youth Award Celebrating Young Talent in the ECO Region called all young digital artists to submit their entries for the award, celebrating the best in digital art and graphic design from the vibrant

ECO member states.

Their designs should be original, creative, and effectively communicate a message; and contribute to the culture and heritage of the ECO region, reflecting its diverse and rich traditions.

The Deadline to apply for the award is May 15, 2024.

It is worth mentioning here that there is a need for the expansion of relations among the peoples in the ECO region, along with the digital art and graphic design from the vibrant

ECO countries' development, which has increased the importance of planning to maximize their optimal participation in the activities implemented by the ECO Cultural Institute. The ECO Youth Award initiative has been developed to support the plan above.

As per the scope of the proposal, the ECOCI Youth Award initiative has been proposed with the aim to discover young talents and to pave the way to further popularize the ECO Cultural Institute.

PMD forecast more rains-wind, thunderstorm during this week with occasional gaps

ISLAMABAD (APP): After culmination of the ongoing rain spell on April 15, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast more rain-wind/thunderstorm at various parts of the country during the current week with occasional gaps.

Another strong westerly wave was likely to enter western parts of the country on April 16 (night) and likely to grip most parts of Balochistan on April 17 and will extend to upper parts on April 18.

Under the influence of this weather system, rain-wind/thunderstorm with few heavy, with isolated

very heavy falls) is expected in Balochistan including Gwadar, Kech, Awaran, Chagi, Kharan, Awaran, Lasbella, Khuzdar, Kalat, Noushki, Mastung, Jhal Magsi, Naseerabad, Sibbi, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Barkhan, Loralai, Harnai, Qilla Saifullah, Mastung, Ziarat, Shirani, Zhob, Musa Khel and Barkhan from April 16 (night) to April 19 (morning).

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rain-wind-storm/thunderstorm accompanied by few heavy, with isolated very heavy falls with snowfall over high mountains is expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat.

IRSA releases 152,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 152,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 197,600 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1418.22 feet and was 20.22 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 51,200 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1108.20 feet, which was 58.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

Govt disburses Rs 66,037m for various water sector schemes so far

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released an amount of Rs 66,037 million for various water resources schemes so far under the annual Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

According to the official data issued by the Planning Commission, the government had specified a sum of Rs 110,500 million for various projects in PSDP 2023-24. Out of the total release amount, the local component stood at Rs 90,367.54 million, while the foreign aid component was Rs 20,132.46 billion. A sum of Rs 30,454.74 million has been spent on various water-related projects so far. For ongoing schemes, an amount of Rs 20,000 million has been allocated for Damer Basha Dam Project (dam part), Rs 15,500 million for K-4 Greater Water Supply Scheme (Karachi), Rs 10,500 million for the Mohmand dam, Rs 5,000 million for Damer Basha Dam Project (Land Acquisition and Resettlement), Rs 3,273.834 million for

construction of Basool Dam, Rs 1000 million for construction of 100 delay action dams in Balochistan, Rs 3000 million for construction of Awaran dam, Rs 1500 million for construction of Gish Kaur Storage Dam, Rs 2500 million for construction of Panjur Storage dam, Rs 2000 million for construction of Winder dam (Lasbela), Rs 1244.741 million for construction of 6 small dams (Zhob and Sherani districts), Rs 1000 million for increasing storage capacity and improvement in command areas of Tanda dam Kohat, Rs 1000 million each for Kurram Tangi dam, normal/emergent flood programme and Rs 770 million for Mangi dam.

Under the new scheme, Rs 10,000 million was allocated for Umbrella PC-1 of the Flood Protection Sector Project, Rs 1000 million each for the remodeling of Pat Feeder Canal, Kachhi Canal Project, construction of Sumari Payan dam project (Kohat), and Rs 385.736 million for the construction of Asreli Storage Dam Sui in the PSDP for FY 2023-24.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Constitution Avenue during rain in the Federal Capital.

ICT admin tightened surveillance to control fare hikes by transporters

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the commuters are coming back to the Federal Capital from different cities of the country, the district administration has ramped up monitoring efforts across various bus stands in the city to deter any attempts at exploiting passengers during this busy period.

According to the Spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabassum, all Assistant Commissioners were present at Faizabad, 26 Number, Karachi Company and other bus stands and actively monitored the transportation process to curb the fare hikes.

In a recent operation, Assistant Commissioner Uzair Ali Khan wielded swift action, imposing a hefty fine of Rs 5,000 on a vehicle found overcharging

at Karachi Company Bus Stand. This decisive move underscored the administration's commitment to ensuring fair pricing for commuters, Dr Abdullah said.

At the Faizabad bus terminal, Assistant Commissioner Farwah Batool spearheaded an inspection, uncovering a breach of regulations. An individual was apprehended for violating the fixed fares by the government. Such proactive measures demonstrate a zero-tolerance stance against violations, the spokesperson said.

He said that on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the constant presence of assistant commissioners and magistrates at all bus stands.

Registered voters in Pakistan surge to 130 million

ISLAMABAD (APP): The total number of registered voters in the country has surged to 130.136 million from 128.59 million on the eve of February 8 general elections.

According to the latest data released by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the registered voters as on date are 130.136 million, with 70,043 million males and 60,092 million females, reflecting an increase of 1.546 million voters since the February 8 elections.

Islamabad has a total of 1,094 million voters, including 0.52 million females and 0.574 million males.

Similarly, there are voters 5.44 million, including 2,389 million females and 3,051 million males in Balochistan; 22,183 million, including 12,074 million males and 10,109 million females in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 74,093 million, including 39,563 million males and 34,530 million females in Punjab; and 27,326 million voters, including 14,781 million males and 12,545 million females in Sindh.

Farewell ceremony held in honor of Inspector Muhammad Aslam

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: A farewell ceremony was held in honor of Inspector Muhammad Aslam at Safe City Islamabad, a public rela-

service was to retire one day. He asked the serving police officials to do their best to earn respect for the department. He was of the view that public servants



tions officer said.

He said that CPO Safe City/Traffic graced the occasion as the chief guest, while senior police officers and officials were also present on the occasion.

The CPO Safe City/Traffic conveyed good wishes to the retiring inspector and said that retirement is part of the service as the one who joins the

can earn a good name by serving the citizens with devotion and dedication.

He further said that the contribution of Inspector Muhammad Aslam to the Islamabad Capital Police would be remembered. At the end, he presented a bouquet to the retired officer and also expressed his best wishes for his future endeavors.



ISLAMABAD: Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party of Dubai Matloob Shah presenting sweet to Member National Assembly of PPP Natasha Doltana during a ceremony in honour of newly elected unopposed Member National Assembly Asifa Bhutto Zardari, at NPC.

NH&MP takes stern action against overcharging on Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the directions of Inspector General, National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) Salman Chaudhry, the officers took stern action against the complaints of overcharging by the transporters during Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to press release, NH&MP returned more than Rs 3,900,000 to passengers of public service vehicles that were overcharged during Eid days. Additionally, 6,935 public service vehicles were fined on overcharging and over-

loading. More than Rs 11 million fined was imposed against these violations.

Furthermore, NHMP ensured the safe and comfortable travel of commuters on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Timely and quick action of Motorway Police was highly appreciated.

Inspector General Salman Chaudhry reiterated that the safety of passengers travelling on National Highways across Pakistan's remains NHMP's prime responsibility.

Amjad Bobby remembered on 19th death anniversary for timeless contributions to music

MULTAN (APP): In the heart of Pakistan's lively music scene, Amjad Bobby remains the king of music, even 19 years after his passing.

As the music world commemorates his 19th death anniversary on April 15, it's not just a day to mourn the loss of a maestro rather it is a day to celebrate the timeless melodies and soul-stirring compositions that Bobby gifted to the world.

Born in Amritsar India, on March 20, 1944, Amjad Bobby's journey into the realm of music was destined to be extraordi-

nary.

His early years were steeped in the rich cultural tapestry of Pakistan, where music wasn't just a form of entertainment but a way of life. Bobby's innate talent for music became apparent at a young age, and he embarked on a journey to hone his craft.

As Bobby's reputation grew, so did his opportunities.

He made his mark in the Pakistani film industry, where he composed music for numerous films, enchanting audiences with his melodious tunes and poignant lyrics.

Independent candidates challenge election results from Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three independent candidates have challenged the results of general elections held in Islamabad's three constituencies on February 8. Aamir Mughal from NA-46 Islamabad, Shoaib Shaheen from NA-47, and Ali Bukhari from NA-48, in their petitions before the election tribunal, pleaded for revocation of the victory notification of all the winning candidates.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Constitution Avenue decorated with Saudi Arabia and Pakistani banners in the Federal Capital, in connection with Saudi delegation, led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan will visit in Pakistan.