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Mathew Miller says: US supports Saudi crown prince's visit to Pakistan

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States of America said it encourages diplomatic engagements among its partners and supports the upcoming visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan, expected sometime this month.

The statement by State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller was issued in response to a question about diplomatic activities in the region, including Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's official tour of the South Asian state.

The Saudi crown prince's visit to Pakistan is likely to occur amid high-level exchanges between the two countries, as Islamabad seeks foreign investment to address its economic challenges.

"We always support diplomatic engagement between our partners," Miller said during a media briefing. "I don't have any further

comment on the visit between the Saudi crown prince to Pakistan, but it's — that kind of diplomatic engagement is routine and something that we support and encourage."

In response to a question regarding Senator Chuck Schumer, the Majority Leader of the US Senate, had met with the Pakistani ambassador and discussed the protection of PTI leaders, including Imran Khan and if the US State Department also considers the protection of PTI leaders a top priority, Miller said that he was not aware of any such conversation between the State Department and Senator Schumer.

Miller addressed reports of Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's reported warning to Pakistan regarding the safety of PTI leaders, affirming the US commitment to human rights.



BEIJING: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiative Prof. Ahsan Iqbal presenting commemorative coin and postage stamp which launched to celebrate the "Decade of CPEC" to Vice Foreign Minister of China H.E. Sun Weidong at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Pak-China all weather friendship Ahsan, Weidong hold wide-ranging discussions to solidify

BEIJING (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal met with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, Sun Weidong here on Wednesday and held wide-ranging discussions, aimed at even further solidifying the "All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership."

Discussions also included a review of successful culmination of the first decade of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the progress achieved in its second decade, especially on the five corridors, namely growth, livelihood, openness, inclusivity and innovation, as outlined by Chinese Vice Premier, He Lifeng last year. In this regard, he lauded services

of Minister Planning Ahsan Iqbal as called him Mr. CPEC and noted the 5-E's framework, i.e. Export, Energy, Equity, E-Pakistan and Environment, envisioned by the Government of Pakistan, to implement these five corridors under CPEC. Both sides also discussed early implementation of ML-1, KKH realignment and other key infrastructure projects in Pakistan. The minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the high-quality development of CPEC, outlining future cooperation under CPEC phase-II in such priority sectors as IT, agriculture modernization, textile, minerals and renewable energy, among others.



GENEVA: Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik being the chair of incumbent Asia Pacific Region of INSARAG presided the UN INSARAG steering group meeting in Geneva.

May 9 to be remembered as Black Day in Pakistan's history: Attaullah Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has said the nation will neither forget the perpetrators of the 9th May incidents nor allow the repetition of such criminal acts against the country. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad this evening, he said May 9 will be remembered as a black day in the history of Pakistan when a chaos-prone political gang hatched a conspiracy and attacked Pakistan's integrity, security, and development.

He said irrefutable evidence is available against the perpetrators involved in

May 9 incidents and the courts should expedite cases against them.

The Minister said these elements even did not hesitate in desecrating martyrs' monuments and targeting state institutions and buildings of national pride including the Jinnah House, Lahore.

Attaullah Tarar also urged the youth to be aware of the elements, which are hell bent on creating uncertainty and chaos to hinder Pakistan's development and progress.

He assured that all possible measures would be taken to avoid desecration of martyrs' monuments.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the National Conference on Education Emergency.

Aspires highly educated Pakistan PM declares Education Emergency to enroll 26m out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday declared an 'Education Emergency' across Pakistan to enroll around 26 million out-of-school children and promote literacy to make the country regain its lost space and develop it as one of the most educated societies in the world.

"Today, with iron conviction, and the support of provinces, we will handle the challenge of 26 million out-of-school children. We will bring them back to school...I declare from this moment an Emergency in Education all over Pakistan...The way we did it in Punjab, we will do it in Pakistan," the prime minister said addressing the National Conference on Education Emergency.

He told the gathering

of federal ministers, parliamentarians, vice-chancellors, diplomats, and development partners that he would personally supervise the programme and meet all the chief ministers, setting aside political affiliations, with a vision to march in unison, expressing the hope that the provinces too would extend their support.

"This is about our children and our future... This is a very challenging task, no doubt. But nations which had faced difficulties and defeat in the past arose from the ashes of defeat. Germany and Japan are the examples. Why can't Pakistan be? I guarantee, if we move in unison to find our space, Pakistan will emerge as one of the most educated societies one day," he re-

marked. The prime minister, recounting the achievements of the Punjab Government during his chief ministership, highlighted the boosted enrollment rates, especially for girls, through initiatives like the Zevar Taleem Programme, and rescuing 90,000 boys from brick kilns to sending them to schools. He also mentioned outsourcing of 10,000 poorly performing schools to improve education quality and established Daanish Schools which offered free high-quality education and boarding for underprivileged children. The Punjab Education Endowment Fund provided scholarships to hundreds of thousands of deserving students based on merit.

of 26 million out-of-school children and stunted growth were major challenges facing Pakistan which required huge financial resources. "But the real challenge is the will to do," he commented and recalled Pakistan's manifestation of the commitment to become a nuclear power despite international pressures, and eliminating terrorism by sacrificing around 80,000 lives to establish peace in the country as well as the globe.

In his address, Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said the education sector needed immediate actions and urgent responses as Pakistan stood at the crossroads of destination with no option to lose.

PM calls special cabinet meeting to declare May 9 as 'Black Day'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to call a special cabinet meeting tomorrow (Thursday) to declare May 9 as a 'Black Day' due to the vandalism of the opposition party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on this day last year.

The special meeting of the federal cabinet presided by PM Shehbaz Sharif will be held in the Parliament House on Thursday.

In the meeting, the sources said the Prime Minister would give a special message to the nation on the May 9 incidents from the forum of the federal cabinet.

Security forces kill 6 terrorists in two different operations in KP

RAWALPINDI (PR): Six terrorists were killed in two different operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today. According to ISPR, the security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Dera Ismail Khan District during which five terrorists were neutralized. In another fire exchange in North Waziristan District, own troops effectively engaged terrorists' location as a result of which another Terrorist Inam Ullah was killed. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as innocent civilians.

Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as the security forces are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism.

Ministry confirms moon unseen, Ziqad to begin May 10

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Wednesday announced that the moon of Ziqad 1445 AH has not been sighted. Following the directive of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee.

'Ready to face inquiry into 2014 sit-in', Imran responds to military flak

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former prime minister and incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder, Imran Khan, has said that he is ready for an inquiry into his party's 2014 sit-in, a day after the chief military spokesperson hinted at a judicial probe into the event. "I will be happy if I am presented before the inquiry committee. All the allegations leveled against me regarding the 2014 sit-in are false... the 2013 election was the election of ROs," he remarked while interacting informally with the media at Adiala Jail on Wednesday. The army on Tuesday sought a sincere and public apology from Khan and asked him to shun what it called "politics of anarchy and hate" to revive his political fortunes. However, at the same time, it dismissed the possibility of any 'deal' with the PTI founder, saying there won't be any talks with "anarchists."

At a press conference, DG Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Ahmed Sharif said that there was no doubt that the PTI was behind the

May 9 riots. However, he said that yet some people were demanding the judicial commission to probe the events of May 9.

He said the army was ready for the formation of a judicial commission but added that such an inquiry should also cover the 2014 sit-in and other related events. The DG ISPR denied the 'narrative' that May 9 was a 'false flag operation'.

In today's media interaction, Imran Khan also questioned the feasibility of negotiations with the federal government in light of former caretaker prime minister Anwarul Haq Kakar's reference to Form-47. Kakar, while having a heated exchange with PML-N leader Hanif Abbasi over wheat scandal, had reportedly hinted at dropping a bombshell regarding Form-47, insinuating that it "would leave the PML-N red-faced". Kakar hinted at possible tampering in Form-47 while speaking to Abbasi, a veiled reference to allegations also made by the opposition PTI, whose candidates allege rigging in the Feb 8 general elections.

Saudia says anyone violating Hajj regulations b/w June 2-20 will be punished

ISLAMABAD (APP): Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry has announced that violators of the Hajj regulations and instructions without a permit during the period June 2-20 will be punished.

Citizens, residents, and visitors to the Kingdom caught violating Hajj regulations and instructions without a permit in Makkah, the area around the Grand Mosque, Hajj sites, the Haramain station in Al-Rusayfah, security control centers, sorting centers, and temporary security control centers during the specified period will be fined SR 10,000 (\$2,666).



ISLAMABAD: Participants attending a seminar titled "Tahafuz e Ain e Pakistan kesy aur kiun" under the auspices of Tehreek Tahafuz Pakistan in the Federal Capital.

Pak-Uzbekistan to start work on trade corridor with Afghanistan: Uzbek Minister

PM reiterates commitment to complete trade, connectivity projects with Uzbekistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Uzbek Deputy Minister for Transport and Aviation, Jasurbek Choriev has said that Pakistan and Uzbekistan have decided to start work on the trilateral trade corridor with Afghanistan, which is of great importance in regional economic integration.

Including Afghanistan, all three parties are willing to complete this trade corridor and its completion will increase regional trade and boost economic activities in the regional countries, Jasurbek Choriev said this at the Tashkent International Investment Forum (TIIF) while talking to APP.

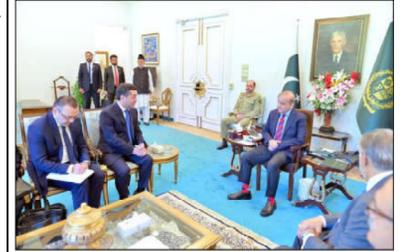
The minister said that Pakistan was our foremost priority economic partner

as well in the recent future, with which we are working in many spheres at the economic and trade level.

He said that the Pakistan-Uzbekistan partnership is of great importance in regional economic and trade integration and Uzbekistan considers Pakistan will have a significant partner in this regard.

The Minister said that Uzbekistan is the central country of Central Asia and similarly, Pakistan is also a Geo-Strategically important country of South Asia located in the neighbouring Central Asia.

He said that air, rail and road connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan is essential to increase bilateral trade between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan H.E. Bakhtiyor Saidov called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Naqvi lauds FC North Balochistan's role for peace, development in province

QUETTA (INP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the headquarters of Frontier Corps North Balochistan today (Wednesday).

Mohsin Naqvi was welcomed by FC North IG Major General Amir Ajmal Chaudhry and saluted by troops of FC North.

Minister Naqvi paid homage to the martyrs by laying a floral wreath at the martyrs' memorial and reciting Fatiha (prayers). He paid tribute to martyrs' sacrifices for the nation.

During his tour, Minister Naqvi explored the museum and examined the latest tools utilized by FC North, showing keen interest in historical artifacts.

A special session was convened under his presidency at FC North

and commended the FC North's role in maintaining peace and order in Balochistan. In his address, Minister Naqvi reiterated the pivotal contributions of FC North in ensuring the prosperity of the region.

He commended the professional capabilities and courage of the officers and young men of FC North, stating, "We are proud of their dedication to duty." Minister Naqvi underscored the patriotism of Balochistan residents, and emphasized, development and prosperity was attainable only with the prevailing peace and order. He was briefed on FC North's professional performance and responsibilities, further highlighting the organization's vital contributions to security and stability in Balochistan.



QUETTA: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi offering fatcha at the Martyrs Monument during his visit to Frontier Corps Balochistan (North) Headquarters.

PTI's penchant for baseless allegations and stirring controversy: Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said on Wednesday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has a penchant for baseless allegations and a tendency to stir controversies.

Speaking to a private news channel, he said that PTI has resorted to inconsistent statements and actions over the past years.

He said that PTI's actions have detrimental effects on state institutional integrity and public discourse.

While they speak of dialogue, they simultaneously indulge in baseless accusations, tarnishing the reputation of our institutions, he added.

Responding to a question about the potential for dialogue with PTI, he said, "We are open to dialogue, but certain conditions must be to make it productive."

He said that PTI

PM felicitates Putin on fifth presidential term

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has extended heartfelt felicitation to Vladimir Putin for taking the responsibility of leading Russia for the fifth term as President.

In his felicitation message on social media platform X today, the Prime Minister said he is looking forward to working closely with the Russian President for enhancing Pakistan-Russia cooperation in mutual benefit of our two people.

President approves appointment of Rubina Khalid as BISP Chairperson

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari Wednesday approved the appointment of Rubina Khalid as Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

He also accepted the resignation of Dr Amjad Saqib from his position as Chairperson, a press release issued by the President House said.

NEPRA notifies Rs 2.83 per unit hike in power tariff for March

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Wednesday notified Rs 2.83 per unit increase in power tariff for March under monthly fuel adjustment mechanism.

According to the NEPRA notification, the increase would be applicable to all the consumers categories except electric vehicle charging stations and lifeline consumers.

The said adjustment shall be shown separately in the consumers' bills on the basis of units billed to the consumers in the month of March. XWDISCOs shall reflect the fuel charges adjustment in respect of March 2024 in the billing month of May, 2024, it further said.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent
Narcotic darkness

We have plenty of smoke with fire. Citizens, particularly parents, caught in Pakistan's grave drug problem are on edge. Despite frequent reports of police and the ANF busting drug cartels, information about legal actions against peddlers is as scant as the conviction rate. The Organised Crime Unit of Lahore has captured an international ring that provided narcotics and 'party drugs' to elite youth. These criminals — the Jordan Gang — ran a network from Central Asia, Mexico, Canada, the US and other countries, and supplied exorbitantly priced drugs in Lahore and Multan, targeting select students in academic institutions. Their modus operandi — offer deals to youngsters on the internet through fake IDs and in partnership with corrupt GPO and police officials — should be a cause of concern for the authorities. This is not the first attempt at infecting the young: last August, two security officials at the Islamic University of Bahawalpur were caught with crystal meth and offensive videos of teachers and students. The Punjab Police released an alarming report last month: some 234 police officers were involved in the drug trade across Punjab. Young people are experimental, anxious and restless, keen to dodge routine with a heady hit. Small wonder, then, that public health experts urge policymakers and law enforcement to understand that punishment-driven strategies are counterproductive. Instead, they must weed out rogue personnel and powerful groups who claim a lion's share of the profits from narcotic rackets, so that sealing supply routes, including those along a porous border, is successful. The crisis also demands awareness campaigns and collaboration among parents, NGOs and educational facilities to identify signs of addiction and provide therapy and rehabilitation. Long-term success hinges on restructured narcotic courts so that faster trials can ensure a rise in conviction levels — the latter should, ideally, match the regularity of narcotic seizures. This country cannot allow addiction to rip through society and ravage our future generations.

Fly on Great Wall

Shahzad Sharjeel

As our great neighbour becomes greater by the day, we are moving from being 'another brick in the wall' to nothing more than a fly on the wall — the Great Wall, that is. Geographical proximity and the mostly congenial nature of ties notwithstanding, do we really know China? Folklore in the Gilgit-Baltistan region would have you believe that before the ancient mountain passes fell into disuse, one could run with a hot chapati and arrive on the Chinese side with the bread still warm. Exaggeration, perhaps, but the road distance between Islamabad and Tashkur-gan, the Chinese border town, via the Khunjerab Pass is half the distance between the federal capital and Karachi. Besides the fabled Silk Road, the Great Wall, the Xinjiang region, and the names of a few cosmopolitan centres like Beijing and Shanghai, most of us would be hard-pressed to name a couple more cities or regions. All of it can't be blamed on the lack of curiosity on the part of China's neighbours, particularly in the subcontinent. The ebb and flow of our interest in knowing China has also been regulated by policy decisions in great Chinese capitals over the millennia. How two of the greatest civilisations on earth can live cheek by jowl and yet be barely acquainted has been discussed in detail by Shyam Saran, former diplomat and author, in his wonderfully narrated book *How China Sees India And The World*. How the subcontinent and China have managed to remain indifferent towards each other for most of recorded history is marked by epochs of respectful distance and

epochs of self-importance bordering on disdain on the latter's part. In the first millennium, people of the Middle Kingdom regarded India with some awe as an emblem of Eastern sophistication and spirituality. In the second millennium, everything beyond the core of the Mandate of Heaven began to be considered 'barbaric'. Trade caravans through the storied Silk Road — in reality, a microcosm of routes and maritime exchanges through the ports in southern India — preceded the even more talked-about Indian export, the teachings of Lord Buddha. Monks from both sides crisscrossing the mountain passes, Central Asian steppes, sea routes, and the Tibetan plateau never outnumbered the merchants of silk, porcelain, jade, and spices. Tibet and the fight over it between the two neighbours came much later. It's unimaginable today that Tibet, a Shangri-La wrapped in a mythical mist between 8th and 9th CE, extended its control to present-day Yunnan, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia, and the Mongolian People's Republic. Images of Tibet for us swing between the sublimity of Buddhist monasteries, to things as pedestrian as a plaza famous for auto parts in Karachi, and a moisturiser-cum skin-lightening agent named after snow from the roof of the world. The difficult-to-translate Arab tradition of al-wala, wal-bara (embrace the beneficial and disavow the harmful) can be seen at work during Mao's speech to the politburo in 1962, before the Indo-Chinese border war. While describing the 'one-and-a-half' prior wars between them, he declared a skirmish between a Tang dynasty diplomatic mission to India in 647 CE and a local adventurer who tried to usurp King Harsha's

throne in Kanauj a full war, whereas Timur's attack in 1398 merited only the status of a 'half war', owing to his Mongolian identity. How interesting that a Muslim invasion against their coreligionists' rule in India, and the indiscriminate horror unleashed by the conquering hordes, is owned by another country, albeit half-heartedly because of Timur's Mongol identity. Ev—everyone outside of the Middle Kingdom, the centre of the Chinese civilisation between the Yellow and Yangtze rivers, qualified, at best, as 'half-Chinese.' This sort of accounting can also be described as 'too clever by half' or 'deedh-hoshiyari', its Urdu equivalent. The two-way influences of the Chinese and Indus-Gandhara civilisations are too numerous to list here. A few disparate examples are 'Tanchoi', commonly known as the 'Banarasi' sari, which derives its name from three Gujarati artisans who travelled to Shanghai in 1856 as apprentices to one Mr Chhoi, a famous silk weaver. 'Tan' means three in Gujarati dialects, and when the weavers returned to Surat, Tanchoi was born. As demand for the fabric decreased, the artisans and their craft shifted to Banaras, and the name has stuck since. 'Zen', meaning meditation, evolved from the Sanskrit word 'dhyana'. 'Bokhara', is a variation of 'vihara', meaning monastery. Central Asia was a bastion of Bud-dh-ism before the Muslim influence. Archae-olo-g-ists like Aurel Stein called the entire Cen-tral Asian zone 'Serindia'. The affinities and irritants between Pakistan and China have been left out for another piece. -- Courtesy Dawn

Gaza's fate

Mahir Ali

Waking up yesterday to the news that Hamas had accepted a ceasefire proposal came as a pleasant surprise, but it did not last long. It was accompanied by reports of Israel's long-threatened infiltration into Rafah, a day after it had urged 100,000 'civilians' to evacuate a city in Gaza that has become a refuge for almost 1.5 million Palestinians. The sector subsequently began to be pounded — presumably with ammunition supplied by the US and UK — under the apparent assumption that any Hamas operatives in the area would not have left among the tens of thousands who evacuated on foot, by vehicles or on donkey carts. Almost every international ally of the Zionist regime has seemingly tried to talk it out of invading Rafah, yet their weapons keep flowing to Israel. Global history is peppered with instances of hypocrisy, but seldom have they been as egregious or stark as in 2024. In the past, sufficiently serious cautions from Washington have often produced the desired effect by at least temporarily reducing Israeli excesses. Benjamin Netanyahu, however, falls in a different category. Any semblance of a pause in hostilities, let alone a sustainable ceasefire, would spell his doom. The revived demonstrations in Israeli cities are by no means dedicated to securing a ceasefire, although some of the protesters support that goal. Their demands on Gaza are somewhat more oblique, but invariably entail the return of the surviving hostages — which would inevitably involve at least a temporary cessation of hostilities. But any kind of peace, however fragile, does not suit Netanyahu. Apart from the indictments for corruption, he

presides over a regime that ignored — possibly deliberately — the clear warning signs of a Hamas assault against kibbutzim on the periphery of Gaza, populated to a considerable extent by Jews who do not buy into the narrative of exclusively Jewish nationhood. Netanyahu and his more vicious allies are almost as contemptuous of conciliatory Jews, Israeli or otherwise, as they are of Palestinians. In their blighted vision, the Jewish students participating in protests in the US, UK or Australia are far more problematic than the goyim who can more easily be dismissed as antisemitic. The anti-genocide protests have been spreading beyond the US to Europe and even Australia, with the encampments routinely derided by antagonistic politicians pointing out that Jewish students feel intimidated — albeit presumably not as much as children, women and men in Gaza, where the death toll since Oct 7 is approaching 35,000. Later this week, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) is expected to vote on whether to admit Palestine as a full member, yet a probable vote overwhelmingly in favour of the proposition won't cut ice with the Security Council, where the US veto will prevail, as it has so many times whenever a challenge to Zionism has been considered. Almost 50 years ago, in November 1974, Yasser Arafat addressed the UNGA, having arrived with his holster and an olive branch, famously declaring: "Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand". In his landmark speech, Arafat decried Zionist acts of "barbarism" and the "temerity" of the "Zionists and

colonialists ... to describe the just struggle of our people as terror". A couple of decades before the post-Oslo Palestinian Authority he initially presided over became a handmaiden of the Zionist occupation, Arafat pointed out to the UN that "when it became obvious that the Palestinians would not recuperate one inch of Palestine through exclusively political means, our people had no choice but to resort to armed struggle". He made no mention of a two-state solution, which is currently the favoured option among many of those who have contributed over the decades towards diminishing the possibility of such an outcome. Arafat held out a long-term hope for "one democratic state where Christian, Jew and Muslim live in justice, equality and fraternity". That remains a dead man's dream. Neither a one-state nor a two-state outcome is on the cards, and that would not change with Netanyahu's replacement by a superficially less obnoxious figurehead. The drift towards Palestinian genocide dates back at least to 1947-48, and the resistance to it has been equally evident since then. The olive branch that Arafat brought to the UN didn't fall. It was effectively wrested from his hand. All too many olive trees have been chopped down since then, particularly after the Oslo 'process', when the trend towards illegal settlements was ramped up, backed by successive US governments. Replacing the Netanyahu regime with an equally absurd alternative would only mean that, a further 50 years hence, future generations will still be marveling at the impotence of their ancestors. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

PM directs early establishment of Pakistan Skill Company, Skill Development Fund

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to immediately initiate the process of establishing the Pakistan Skill Company and Pakistan Skill Development Fund to unify the technical and vocational education countrywide and provide better employment to Pakistani workers abroad. The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting to review the matters of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, and National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), decided to introduce reforms in the said organisations.

He instructed to further activate the NAVTC to provide world-class technical and vocational training to the young workforce and also called for ensuring the globally renowned and international certifications in all technical fields. The prime minister also emphasised the collaboration between the center and provinces to

elevate the quality of Pakistan's technical manpower and human resource development. He called for establishing an integrated system of regulating the manpower equipped with the best and world-class professional technical skills. Besides, in coordination with NADRA,



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a sectoral briefing regarding NAVTC and Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain chairing a meeting of Fertilizer Review Committee.

Fertilizer companies not to be allowed to take undue profit: Rana Tanveer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries & Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Wednesday said that fertilizer companies must not be allowed to take undue profit. Steps should be taken to ensure uniform price of the urea fertilizer across the country for the convenience of farmers, he directed while chairing a meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee. Besides the Federal Secretary of Industries and Production and agriculture

Jam Kamal urges Pakistan, Belarus trade boost: Potential yet to be fully exploited

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday stressed the need for Pakistan and Belarus to elevate their bilateral trade relations to fully exploit their potential. Pakistan has been exporting a diverse range of goods to Belarus, including medicaments, optical/medical apparatus, rice,

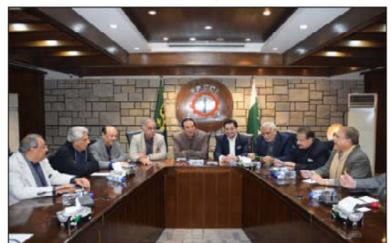
leather articles, textiles, cutlery, footwear, sports requisites, cotton garments, salt, and mangoes, said a press release issued here. However, Pakistan's imports from Belarus consist of agriculture tractors, fertilizer, wood pulp, and motor vehicles. Minister Jam Kamal Khan highlighted Pakistan's significant

position as the fourth-largest dairy producer globally, suggesting that the country has the capability to become a major exporter in this sector. He urged the exploration of new avenues and potential to capitalize on this opportunity, proposing that Belarus upgrade its tractors to meet Pakistan's agricultural requirements.

May 9th incidents condemnable, Business community stands with Pak Army: Atif Ikram

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh has strongly condemned the events of May 9 and said that the business community stands in solidarity with the Pakistan Army. We pay tribute to the services of Pakistan forces and the proud spirit of martyrdom for Pakistan. The efforts of the Special Facilitation Council (SIFC) to bring investment to the country are commendable, he expressed these views while addressing a meeting of the business community.

President Atif Ikram said that on May 9 last year, Jinnah House, sensitive installations, damaged at the international level. The economy is badly affected by incidents like May 9,



so a plan should be made so that these incidents cannot be repeated in the future. The country's prestige was

Pakistan, Algeria to boost trade relation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pakistan and Algeria agreed to further strengthen bilateral ties in diverse areas of mutual interests, particularly to boost economic ties. The two sides agreed to boost bilateral trade volume through enhancing economic activities. The notion to elevate bilateral economic ties was discussed during a visit by Dr. Ibrahim Romani, Ambassador of Algeria to Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Wednesday. During the visit, a

meeting between the visiting ambassador and RCCI officials was held in which both sides expressed strong desire to enhance trade, investment, and cultural exchange. Matters pertaining to bilateral relations, investment opportunities, trade facilitation measures, cultural exchange and tourism, diplomatic relations & economic development also came under discussion. According to details the ambassador said that his country was keen to promote trade and economic ties with Pakistan.

PSX loses 159 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) Wednesday witnessed bearish trend and shed 159.38 points, a negative change of 0.22 percent, closing at 72,601.82 points against 72,761.20 points the previous trading day. A total of 970,325,029 shares valuing Rs 23,514 billion were traded during the day as compared to 621,826,404 shares valuing Rs 24,970 billion the last day. Some 388 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 149 of them recorded gains and 208 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 31 remained unchanged.

IT, Telecom role vital for economic uplift: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation of Telecom Infrastructure Services Company EDOTCO Group led by its Group CEO Mohamed Adlan Ahmad Tajuddin on Wednesday called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and discussed matters of mutual interest and related to Telecom infrastructure. The other members of the delegation included Annis Sheikh Mohammed, Group CFO, Noreen Sabrina Mohd Noor, Group Head of Corporate Communications, Abdul Aziz, Country Managing Director, and Muhammad Rehan Farooqi, Director

of Corporate Affairs and Planning, said a news release. While talking to the delegation, Shaza Fatima said that steps are being taken for digitalization in the country. She said that the present government is committed to the provision of quality broadband and Internet services to the masses. Shaza Fatima said that the IT and Telecom sector has an important role in the economic uplift of the country. She said that the Ministry of IT & Telecom was taking alongside the telecom industry, adding that issues confronting the Telecom industry will be resolved.

CM KP launches wheat procurement process

Independent Report
DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur inaugurated the wheat procurement drive in the province here on Wednesday.

Accompanied by Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru, the chief minister launched the province-wide procurement process in a ceremony held here at Provincial Reserve Center.

The chief minister was also briefed about wheat procurement and its storage-related matters.

During the briefing, it was informed that that about 600,000 metric tons wheat would be purchased

in the province under a project worth Rs 29 billion. Out of which 300,000 metric tons of wheat would be purchased from local farmers.

As part of procurement process, 40,000 metric tons of wheat would be purchased from local farmers in Dera Ismail Khan as a stock of about 10500 metric tons was already available in the district. Addressing the ceremony, the chief minister said "the payment of purchased wheat would be made within 24 hours."

He said the government was committed to the welfare of farmers and priority was being given to provision of

facilities to them. "Farmers are hardworking people so their welfare and provision of facilities to them was among our priorities," he said.

He emphasized that transparency and quality assurance as core principles of the procurement process and in this regard, he added, effective measures had been made.

"Not buying wheat from Pakistan Agricultural Storage & Services Corporation Limited (PASSCO) resulted in a benefit of Rs 12 billion which would be utilized in the construction and maintenance of warehouses," he said.

According to initial reports reached here that one dead body identified as Agha Sohail of 70 resident of Rawalpindi was found from katcha area of 26 Mail in the jurisdiction of Naparkot police station on Wednesday and the villagers informed the area police about a dead body lying on side of Irrigation Canal there.

Area police with the help of villagers transported the dead body of deceased to Taluka Hospital Khanpur for Medico Legal formalities. The driving license of deceased elderly person was found from place, area police added. Similarly it came to know from local sources that the elderly person was kidnapped by the outlaws few months ago and the kidnappers after brutally torturing on him killed him when the family of deceased innocent elderly person failed to pay the Ransom Money to the dacoits.

Dacoits killed innocent person due to nonpayment of ransom money

SHIKARPUR: An other shameful incident occurred in Shikarpur District in which dacoits throws the tortured dead dead body of one innocent kidnapped elderly person of Rawalpindi on Wednesday.

According to initial reports reached here that one dead body identified as Agha Sohail of 70 resident of Rawalpindi was found from katcha area of 26 Mail in the jurisdiction of Naparkot police station on Wednesday and the villagers informed the area police about a dead body lying on side of Irrigation Canal there.

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LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique chairing the fourth meeting of the Sub-Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, held at the home department.

PHC issues notices in suspension of Mashal advocacy license case

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asad Ullah on Wednesday heard a petition challenging the suspension of advocacy license of Advisor to the Chief Minister for Social Welfare, Mashal Yousafzai by the PHC Bar.

The counsel for the petitioner, Qazi Anwar told the bench that on 3rd January, police allegedly maltreated Advocate Alamzab at the gate of PHC and the same was highlighted by the petitioner Mashal on social

media as a witness of the incident. Following her post, he said, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council suspended the license of Mashal Yousafzai, adding that on a request of the petitioner, Chairman KP Bar Council reinstated her license however, the KP Bar filed an application with Pakistan Bar Council that again suspended her license. The Chief Justice inquired whether the language used in the post was appropriate for a lawyer? Advocate Qazi Anwar replied in negative and said he had already denounced the language of the post.

Marriyum Aurangzeb orders swift completion of CM's 33 special projects

LAHORE (APP): Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb has issued directions for swift completion of Punjab chief minister's 33 special projects, and prioritising health development initiatives on an urgent basis.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, she said that according to the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, seven mega projects in the health sector, worth Rs. 145 billion, were nearing completion. She disclosed that the first phase of the Nawaz Sharif Cancer Institute in Lahore would be completed in a year, while the opening of the

CM takes notice of schoolteacher torture

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken note of a torture incident, committed against a teacher at the Government High School 9/95 L, Sahiwal.

She sought a report from Commissioner Sahiwal in this regard and ordered for arrest of the accused at the earliest.

The CM ordered to provide the best medical treatment facilities to the injured schoolteacher. She strongly condemned the attack, committed by boys on their teacher. She said, "Attack being perpetrated on a schoolteacher is unacceptable under any circumstance."

US Consul General visits FF Steel

PESHAWAR (APP): US Consul General, Shante Moore visited FF Steel in Peshawar on Wednesday to reinforce bilateral trade and investment ties between the US and Pakistan.

During his visit, he met with the senior management team, and praised FF Steel's contributions to Pakistan's economy. FF Steel is one of Pakistan's leading steel manufacturers, known for producing high-quality steel products and investing in research and development. The visit is expected to further enhance economic cooperation between the two countries, which already have a strong bilateral trade relationship with nearly \$2.08 billion in trade in 2023.

Punjab CM reviews health reforms

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif presided over a special meeting to review health reforms, here on Wednesday.

The chief minister expressed her dismay over the previous government not paying any attention to the public health issues. She expressed her severe indignation over the loss of Rs. 4 billion caused to the government exchequer in the Murree hospital project. The meeting decided that legal action would be taken against those who caused huge losses to the government exchequer by delaying the project. The CM said it was highly heart-rending and deplorable to impede provision of health facilities to people during the

previous government's tenure. "It is our duty to safeguard people's money and we cannot permit its loss. We want to establish state-of-the-art health facilities for people in every district. We will provide high quality treatment facilities to the common man."

The proposal to establish a medical college with the help of public-private partnership in Attock, Mianwali, Vehari, Bhakkar and Jhelum was reviewed. A comprehensive briefing was given on the construction, rehabilitation of hospitals: 'Clinic on Wheels', free medicines and other matters, along with undertaking health reforms and other affairs were reviewed during the meeting.



FAISALABAD: Chairman Ulema Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addressing a press conference.

CM's directive prompts relocation of mother and children to welfare center

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: On the directives from Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, the district administration has relocated a mother and her kids to social welfare rehabilitation center after a video surfaced on social media depicting them sleeping in pathetic conditions along the roadside.

Under the supervision of the Child Protection and Welfare Commission and Social Welfare Department, a rescue operation was conducted at Kareem Pura Bazaar. The woman and children were subsequently shifted to a social welfare rehabilitation center. The viral video showed the woman and her children begging in the city's markets, with the children lying on the footpath.



GILGIT: Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad Advocate addressing during Red Cross/Red Crescent Day celebration.

Health minister leads efforts to ensure peace, order across province

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said the government will ensure peace and order throughout the province.

He was chairing the fourth meeting of the Sub-Cabinet Committee on Law and Orders, held at the home department here on Wednesday, on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

The minister paid tribute to the Punjab policemen, who were injured while fighting the enemies of law and order.

During the meeting, instructions have been given to the law and order agencies to speed up the Katcha area operation. The committee gave approval to the Punjab Police for rearrangement of various police stations in the interest of the people.

During the meeting, approval was given to form a JIT on various incidents. Action against drug peddlers, kite making factories and electricity thieves will be continued across the province.

International News

Putin tells the West: Russia will talk only on equal terms

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Vladimir Putin has been 'honoured', in similar fashion to a 'Russian tsar' from the country's past. During his swearing-in for a fresh six-year term as Russia's President, Putin had a double-edged message for the West: "the Kremlin is ready to talk but Russia is girding for victory in Ukraine".

Putin, rose to the senior-most position at the Kremlin only eight years after the fall of the Soviet Union. He is now set to overtake Josef Stalin and effectively become Russia's longest-serving ruler since 'Empress Catherine the Great', should he complete the term.

The 71-year-old, who is also former KGB 'spy' exuded confidence in the carefully choreographed inauguration. The West and his opponents (who are mainly in jail or abroad) cast this as 'a fig leaf of democracy', 'covering a corrupt Russian autocracy'.

As the Russian elite waited in the Hall of Saint Andrew within the Grand Kremlin Palace (where the imperial throne once sat), Putin dissected documents in his office. After this, he walked down the corridors of the Kremlin saluting guards and even stopped to 'leisurely' study a picture on the wall.

"We do not refuse dialogue with Western states" Putin stated after being sworn in. He added that he was ready for talks on 'security and strategic stability' but only on the condition that there was no "arrogance" on the part of the United States and its allies.

Russia's chief (of more than 24 years) promised "victory" and said all Russians were now "answerable to our thousand-year history and our ancestors." He departed from the ceremony to the music "Hail" from Mikhail Glinka's opera "A Life for the Tsar". The words "Hail, hail, my Rus! Hail you are my Russian land" rang out in the Kremlin. The original words are "Hail, hail, our Russian tsar!".

"The authority of our president is higher than ever, higher than the American president, higher even than the Russian tsar. So much depends on our president" said Gennady Zyuganov (a leader of the Communist Party).



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.

Israel seizes Rafah crossing amid global outcry

Monitoring Desk
RAFAH: Israel sent tanks into Rafah in southern Gaza, seizing control of the border crossing with Egypt on Tuesday, an operation the UN said denied it access to the key humanitarian passage.

The military's thrust into the eastern sector of the city packed with displaced civilians came with negotiators and mediators due in Cairo in the latest effort towards a prisoner release and ceasefire in the seven-month-old Israeli offensive. A senior Hamas official, requesting anonymity to discuss the negotiations, warned that it would be Israel's "last chance" to free the estimated 128 prisoners still held in the Palestinian territory, including 35 the military says are dead.

A Hamas delegation was headed "shortly" to Cairo, the official said. Israel has said it would also send negotiators, and mediator Qatar announced it was dispatching a team as well.

3 policemen killed in bomb attack in northeastern Afghanistan

Monitoring Desk
KABUL: Three policemen were killed and five were wounded on Wednesday when a sticky bomb was detonated next to a security convoy tasked with clearing illegal poppy crops in northeastern Afghanistan, the interior ministry said.

The improvised explosive device (IED) was attached to a motorcycle which targeted a convoy of police vehicles in Faizabad, the capital of mountainous Badakhshan province, around 11am local time.

"The bomb exploded while the convoy of police forces was on its way to destroy poppy cultivation," Taliban Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Mateen Qani posted on X.

The explosion comes days after Taliban security officials and residents clashed over the violent clearance of poppy crops in two Badakhshan districts, leaving two dead and sparking rare protests.

Afghanistan was the largest producer of opium before poppy cultivation was banned in a decree by the Taliban supreme leader in April 2022.

Farmers have been encouraged to plant different crops, but none compete with the financial draw of the poppy, leading some to continue discreetly cultivating small plots.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

An AFP journalist saw Taliban authorities searching homes and detaining dozens of people near the scene.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy shake hands at a press conference in Berlin, Germany.

Philippine military chief accuses China of 'malign influence effort'

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: The Philippines' military chief accused China of a "malign influence effort" on Wednesday, after a local newspaper reported a Filipino vice admiral had made a deal with Beijing to de-escalate tensions in the South China Sea. The Manila Times published what it said was a transcript of a phone conversation during which it

UK will expel Russian defence attache over 'malign activity'

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Britain will expel Russia's defence attache, remove diplomatic status from some properties and limit the length of Russian diplomatic visas in response to what interior minister James Cleverly called Moscow's "malign activity".

Addressing parliament on Wednesday, Cleverly said Britain was already "an extremely challenging operating environment for Russian intelligence services" but the measures would "only serve to strengthen our resilience to the Russian threat".

Britain has introduced several waves of sanctions on Russian companies and individuals since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and Cleverly said the Conservative government would not falter in its support of Kyiv.

Italy PM Meloni in Libya to sign cooperation deals

Monitoring Desk
TRIPOLI: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni began a visit to Libya on Tuesday to sign cooperation agreements, and was set to meet leaders from rival administrations in the conflict-torn country. Accompanied by a ministerial delegation on her second visit to Libya since taking office in October 2022, Meloni met the head of the Tripoli-based government, Abdelhamid Dbeibah, Libyan officials said. "Declarations of intent" were due to be signed on cooperation in health, education, and research as well as youth and sports, an Italian government statement said. It said the agreements come as part of Meloni's long-awaited "Mattei Plan" named after Enrico Mattei, founder of the Italian energy company Eni. In the 1950s, he advocated for cooperation with African countries to develop their natural resources. On her first visit to Libya early last year, Meloni signed a major gas deal with the North African country, the continent's richest in hydrocarbon reserves.

Russia hits Ukraine's power grid with a 'massive' attack on a day marking the WWII defeat of Nazism

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russian forces unleashed a nighttime barrage of more than 50 cruise missiles and explosive drones at Ukraine's power grid Wednesday, targeting a wide area in what President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called a "massive" attack on the day the country celebrates the defeat of Nazism in World War II.

The bombardment blasted targets in seven Ukrainian regions, including the Kyiv area and parts of the south and west, damaging homes and the country's rail network, authorities said. Three people, including an 8-year-old girl, were injured, according to officials.

Russia has repeatedly pounded Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the war that is stretching into its third year and has claimed thousands of lives. By taking out the power, the

Pakistan desires to strengthen trade, commerce ties with Uzbekistan: Dy PM Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday said that Pakistan desired to enhance its ties with Uzbekistan in multiple sectors, including trade and commerce.

The deputy prime minister discussed bilateral relations in a meeting with Uzbek Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov, who is on a two-day official visit to Pakistan.

On his arrival at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ishaq Dar received the guest, which followed their one-on-one meeting.

The deputy prime minister said that Pakistan and Uzbekistan enjoyed strong and friendly relations.

The Uzbek foreign minister expressed his plea-

sure in visiting Pakistan, saying they considered Pakistan their second home.

In the meeting, the two sides underscored the cultural, civilizational and historical ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan which provided a solid foundation for robust partnership in multiple domains.

They also expressed satisfaction at close security and defence cooperation and robust engagement at multilateral fora such as the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

The two sides reaffirmed commitment to early implementation of the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railways project, which would give a boost

to bilateral and regional trade, and become a bridge between South and Central Asia.

They discussed at length economic cooperation, trade, investment and connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. They noted that following operationalization of the Transit Trade Agreement, bilateral trade had increased 1.4 times during the previous year and had the potential to reach the targets set during the last Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) held in Tashkent in February 2023. They agreed to identify new areas of economic cooperation and emphasized the importance of a liberal visa regime especially for the business community to promote linkages and people-to-people contacts.



ISLAMABAD: World Bank's Regional Vice President for South Asia Martin Raiser, along with a delegation including country representative Najy Benhassine called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Moshin Naqvi visits CDA for briefing on administration, management, development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Moshin Naqvi on Wednesday visited Capital Development Authority (CDA) for briefing on the administration, management and development of Islamabad. Chairman CDA Mohammad Ali Randhawa welcomed the minister. The minister directed to immediately start development work in sectors which were not developed for 20 years and also to allot plots to the allottees who have not received, despite paying the amount for years.

He also directed to formulate a comprehensive strategy for early possession of the plot because despite paying money, no possession of the plot is an insult of the citizens which is definitely not acceptable.

Moshin Naqvi's order

to digitization of land records of Islamabad and in this regard CDA tasked for computerising land records in 6 months.

It was decided in the meeting that CDA will have a fast one-window system which is a major initiative for the convenience of the citizens of Islamabad.

CDA should ensure the provision of services without delay to the citizens of Islamabad so that there is no hassle of waiting, Moshin Naqvi directed.

The Minister ordered to provide more services online and enable CDA's smart app within three months.

He also instructed to ensure availability of call centre facility at all times and construction of cycling and walking tracks on green balance should be completed soon.

Naqvi asked for a landscaping and beautification plan in Islamabad and the Diplomatic Enclave will be made the most beautiful area of the city in 3 months.

CDA should start work on opening new sectors, Moshin Naqvi directed adding that he will not tolerate any further delay in the sectors which have not yet been given possession to the people.

After introduction with the senior officers of CDA the minister planted a sapling in the lawn of CDA head office.

Federal Interior Secretary Khurram Agha, IG Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Memon, Director Admin ICT Attendance of all CDA members in the meeting.

Pak attaches high importance to its ties with Iran: Pirzada

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Wednesday said that Pakistan attached high importance to its brotherly ties with Iran.

He was talking to Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghaddam, who called on him.

Pirzada said that it was an honour for him to meet and welcome Iranian President Ayatollah Ibrahim Raisi and accompany him during his visit to Pakistan.

The minister acknowledged the ambassador's tireless efforts for strengthening the two countries' relationship.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed various bilateral issues.

They emphasized the shared commitment of Iran and Pakistan to standing up for the rights of the people of Kashmir and Palestine.

They noted that the two countries had been resolute in their support for the two long-standing conflicts.

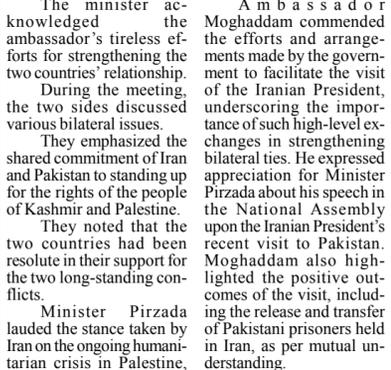
Minister Pirzada lauded the stance taken by Iran on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine.

where the world had witnessed a concerning silence from so-called human rights advocates. He highlighted the importance of Iran's principled position in the face of grave injustice.

The minister informed the ambassador that the message of the Iranian President for the Prime Minister of Pakistan had been duly conveyed. Moreover, he himself delivered the Iranian President's message to the people of Pakistan through a speech in the National Assembly, he added.

Ambassador Moghaddam commended the efforts and arrangements made by the government to facilitate the visit of the Iranian President, underscoring the importance of such high-level exchanges in strengthening bilateral ties. He expressed appreciation for Minister Pirzada about his speech in the National Assembly upon the Iranian President's recent visit to Pakistan.

Moghaddam also highlighted the positive outcomes of the visit, including the release and transfer of Pakistani prisoners held in Iran, as per mutual understanding.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan called on Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Federal Minister for Housing and Works at his office.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan Bakhtiyor Saidov held delegation level talks at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

May 9 to be remembered darkest day in Pakistan's history: Ayaz Sadiq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Wednesday said that May 9 will always be remembered as the darkest day in Pakistan's history when the very foundations of the country were attacked by the miscreant elements, compromising the integrity and prestige of martyrs.

He also said that every patriotic Pakistani has categorically denounced the conspiracy to create a wedge between the nation and its armed forces, said a news release.

"Pakistan owes its existence and integrity to the sacrifices rendered by brave personnel of our security agencies," he expressed these views while denounc-

ing the nefarious designs and mayhem perpetrated by anti-state elements, involved in the riots on May 9, 2023.

While strongly denouncing the nefarious activities of rioters of May 9, the Speaker also reiterated that every Pakistani would continue to safeguard the integrity and respect of martyrs who had rendered their lives for the honor and integrity of the motherland.

He also said the rouge elements had committed such heinous crimes which were not only unimaginable for every peace-loving and patriotic Pakistani but which even the enemies of Pakistan could never have dared.

ICCI organizes seminar on mental health

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari Wednesday urged the pressing need to provide essential information and vital resources to individuals navigating mental health issues.

Addressing a seminar on mental health care in times of financial constraints, he said that awareness sessions on such crucial issues always proved beneficial for the patients to help them come out of the stress and thereby lead a normal life.

The ICCI always remained in forefront to address such issues of the business community and the general public, he said adding that it was also committed to organize such sessions in future for the benefit of the general public and promote awareness about mental health.

Fruitful policies of institutions need of hour: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (Online): PPP parliamentary leader in the Senate Sherry Rehman Wednesday stressed for introducing fruitful policies of institutions which would not only encourage efficiency but also facilitate the employees.

Talking to a private news channel, she said that said Pakistan People's Party always believed in the politics of public welfare and prosperity of Pakistan.

The resolution of public problems are top priority of President Zardari and stressed the need for working round the clock on public welfare projects, she added.

She said that PPP's mission is to solve and address public grievances.

Six cattle markets for sacrificial animals on the cards

ISLAMABAD (APP): Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) will set up six cattle markets for sacrificial animals to facilitate the buyers ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

"Three each cattle market will be set for big and small animals at various locations in the federal capital," an official in the MCI told APP.

About the sites for the cattle markets, he said the authority will establish cattle markets for big animals in Sangiani, I-15 and I-12 while for small animals Bhara Kahu, Lehrar Road near Sultana Foundation and Zia Masjid along Expressway.

Zumrad for collective efforts to create awareness about Thalassemia

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pattern-in-Chief, Pakistan Sweet Home (PSH) Zumrad Khan on Wednesday said that collective efforts were required to create awareness about Thalassemia.

Addressing an event organized by Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in connection with World Thalassemia Day, he said that thalassemic children needed special attention.

He further stressed on the need for promoting and encouraging these children to make them a useful seg-

ment of society.

This year's theme was "Empowering Lives, Embracing Progress: Equitable and Accessible Thalassemia Treatment for All".

International Thalassemia Day is a powerful call to raise awareness about this condition and its impact while celebrating solidarity of resilient Thalassemia community worldwide.

The thalassemia are inherited blood disorders characterized by decreased haemoglobin production.

IRSA curtails water shortage from 30% to 21% for Punjab, Sindh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday curtailed the shortages for the early Kharif period till June 10th, from the initial 30% to 21% for Punjab and Sindh provinces, while allowing full indented supplies for Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the already approved exemption.

The authority, which met with Chairman IRSA Abdul Hameed Mengal in the chair here, reviewed the water situation from April 1st to 30th, 2024, and noted that the actual inflows of 10.35 million acre feet (MAF) far exceeded the forecasted inflows of 7.03 million acre feet, with a 47% increase, said a state



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Moshin Naqvi chairing a meeting at CDA Headquarters.

Randhawa directs to complete Blue Area Parking Plaza by June's first week: Randhawa

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Randhawa Wednesday directed to complete the construction work of the Blue Area Parking Plaza by the first week of June at any cost.

During an inspection of the Blue Area Parking Plaza and other ongoing projects of the federal capital, he assured that there would be no further delay or extension in the completion timeline for the project.

On the occasion, the official of the CDA had provided detail briefing of the project and informed that the parking plaza would comprise two basements, a ground floor and five additional floors.

He said the first floor of the parking plaza, includ-

ing the construction of 18 shops, along with a restaurant and cafe on the rooftop. The official said the parking plaza was designed to accommodate up to 1200 cars simultaneously.

Randhawa directed to complete the construction work of the ground floor shops within 20 days, with a focus on action/rental basis.

Chairman CDA stressed the allotment of shops on the first floor facing Jinnah Avenue should be made on action/rental basis.

Randhawa also visited the Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area F-9/G-9 expansion project.

During the briefing, it was informed that the project involved with addition of two lanes on both sides, covering a total length of 1.8 kilometers.

ANF arrests couple supplying drugs in educational institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) arrested an accused, including a woman involved in the supply of drugs in educational institutions.

According to spokesperson of ANF, the accused were supplying drugs to a major educational institution in Islamabad on a tip-off. The woman was arrested with drugs from the gate of the educational institution and the other accused arrested along with another accused works in the canteen of an educational institution. During the search of the arrested suspect's room, hashish, opium and more tokens of ice were found. According to the investigation, the accused used to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to the accused.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Zulfikar Haider paying a courtesy call on the Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy.

ETPB recovers Rs 38B in properties, Rs 600M in dues

ISLAMABAD (Online): Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) has efficiently reclaimed properties worth Rs 38 billion and retrieved outstanding dues a totaling of Rs 600 million from defaulters since December 2023, to date, under the guidance of chairman Arshad Farid Khan.

According to ETPB spokesman, the special teams, constituted by the board chairman, have successfully recovered Trust Board's land and commercial properties in various locations, including Pakpattan, Mahant Darshan, Okara, Sahiwal, Dipalpur, Hasan Abdal, Karachi, and Lahore.

In Nankana Sahib, he said security person-

nel and other staff were deployed to conduct an operation against the land grabber mafia. As a result, thousands of acres of land were reclaimed, and illegal constructions were demolished.

Additionally, thousands of kanals of departmental land, previously withheld due to pending cases, reached resolution, thereby incorporating them into the trust pool. The revenue has been boosted to Rs 429 million through the modernization of the billing system for urban properties. Rigorous monitoring has led to the issuance of WhatsApp numbers to deter any forms of corruption and bribery, he added.

World Thalassemia Day observed with call for equitable treatment

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Thalassemia Day was observed on Wednesday, with the theme "Empowering Lives, Embracing Progress, Equitable and Accessible 'Thalassemia' Treatment for All".

The day aims to raise awareness about this inherited blood disorder and its impact on patients and their families. 'Thalassemia' is a condition characterized by decreased hemoglobin production, leading to anemia, fatigue, and weakness. If left untreated, it can cause organ damage and even death. However, with regular blood transfusions and Chelation therapy, the condition can be well-managed.

In a message on World Thalassemia Awareness Day, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz emphasized the need for public awareness to prevent Thalassemia.



ISLAMABAD: Additional Secretary Asia Pacific, Imran Siddiqi in a group photograph with Bangladeshi media delegation led by Iktidar Ahmed at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

USAID's locally-led development in education, health transforms Buner, Upper Dir districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on Wednesday gathered government officials, local and international partners, and communities from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)'s Buner and Upper Dir districts to celebrate the conclusion of \$10 million Human Development Activity.

Over four years, the project empowered local communities and organizations to achieve sustainable development outcomes in health and education.

Through collaboration with the KP government, the project provided grants to Pakistani organizations to implement education and health interventions, including operating accelerated learning program centers and restructured and strengthened the Primary Care Health Committee to include women members.

The event underscored the instrumental support of the KP provincial departments of Education, Health, and Population Welfare.

These departments contributed to the interventions' design, implementation, and oversight, fostering a deeper understanding of government priorities among local partners, addressing implementation challenges, and promoting the integration of health and education services.

The government officials expressed gratitude to USAID, the implementing partner Palladium, and the local organizations.

They affirmed their commitment to leveraging the insights and experiences gained from the project, including their continued support to over 1,000 out-of-school girl students enrolled in 34 accelerated learning program centers.

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ISLAMABAD: PM's Coordinator on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam addresses Pakistan Gender Climate Award 2024 ceremony.

PAL announces Rs. 5.2m awards for Pakistani writers, poets

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) on Wednesday announced nomination of Prominent writer, Hassan Manzoor for Kamal-e-Fun Award for the years 2022.

Kamal-e-Fun Award is the highest literary award in the field of literature for recognition of lifetime's achievement in creative and research work.

The amount of this award is Rs. 1,000,000/-. The panel of judges consisted of well-known writers and scholars including Munir Ahmad Badini, Dr. Moeen ud Din Aqeel, Dr. Salma Shaheen, Dr. Abdul Razzaq Sabir, Sarwat Mohyuddin, Riffat Abbass, Yousuf Hussain Abadi, Mubeen Mirza, Dr. Khalid Mahmood Sanjrani, Dr. Rubina Shaheen, Dr. Amjad Tufail, Bushra Farrukh, Haris Khalique, Farrukh Yaar Khan and Akhtar Dargahi met here today.

The meeting, held at the office of PAL, was

presided by Munir Ahmad Badini, Chairperson, PAL. Dr. Najeeba Arif has also announced the National Literary Awards for the year 2022, given on the best literary books written during the year 2022 in Urdu and other Pakistani languages during a press conference held here.

According to the decision of the panel, for Urdu Prose (Creative Literature) Saadat Hasan Manto Award is given to Ahmad Saleem on his Book "Meri Dharti Mere Log" (Judges: Muhammad Hameed Shahid, Asghar Nadeem Syed and Khalid Fateh Muhammad).

For Urdu Prose (Criticism and Research), Baba-i-Urdu Molvi Abdul Haq Award is given to Dr. Aurangzeb Niazi on his book "Urdu Adab Maholiati Tanazur" (Judges: Dr. Moeen ud Din Aqeel, Dr. Khalid Iqbal Yasir and Dr. Nasir Abbass Nayyar).