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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Buddhist Monks led by Minister of Buddhassasana and Religious Affairs of Sri Lanka Vidura Wickramanayaka calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

PM highlights ancient heritage of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday highlighted that Pakistan was proud of its ancient Buddhist heritage, which flourished in the northwest Pakistan in the shape of Gandhara art and culture, over two thousand years ago. He underscored the importance that his government attached to interfaith harmony.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of esteemed Buddhist leaders who called on him.

The delegation is visiting Pakistan to attend a symposium and an exhibition titled "From Gandhara to the World," organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The delegation included Sri Lanka's Minister for Buddhassasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs Vidura Wickramanayaka, Most

Venerable Thich Duc Tuan from Vietnam, Most Venerable Anil Sakya from Thailand and Dr Keshabman Shakya from Nepal. Minister for Religious Affairs, Ch. Saik Hussain, Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Cultural Heritage Attaullah Tarar, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi also attended the meeting.

The prime minister warmly welcomed the delegation and expressed his gratitude for their participation in the symposium, being held in connection with the 'Vesak Day' that commemorates the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Lord Buddha.

He also acknowledged the valuable contributions of the Buddhist scholars and monks to the promotion of interfaith harmony and understanding. During the meeting, the prime minister and the delegation discussed ways to strengthen interfaith dialogue and cooperation, as well as oppor-

tunities for cultural and academic exchanges between Pakistan and the Buddhist majority countries.

"The meeting concluded with a resolve to continue exploring avenues for mutual understanding and cooperation, and to work together towards a more harmonious and peaceful world. In that connection, the possibility of establishing a joint forum for dialogue and collaboration was especially discussed," it was added.

The Buddhist leaders appreciated the prime minister's commitment to fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect for all religions. They also commended Pakistan's efforts to preserve and promote its Buddhist heritage sites and cultural artifacts.

The delegation members showed their keen desire to collaborate with Pakistan in preserving and promoting Buddhist heritage in Pakistan.

Judge writes letter to IHC to transfer PTI founder's marriage case to another court

ISLAMABAD (APP): Judge Sharukh Arjmand of the District and Sessions Court of Islamabad on Wednesday wrote a letter to the Registrar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), urging him to transfer the marriage case of PTI founder and his wife to another court, as the plaintiff, Khawar Manika, had expressed no confidence in his court.

Judge Sharukh Arjmand earlier in the day left the courtroom without pronouncing the verdict in the case, which was reserved on May 23.

The judge, in the letter, took the position that the plaintiff had expressed no confidence in his court for the second time, therefore, it would not be prudent to pronounce a verdict in the case.

Citing the misbehaviour of Khawar Manika, he stated that the defence counsel and the plaintiff throughout the proceedings

(on Wednesday) tried to disrupt the hearing.

At the onset of the hearing, defence counsel Rizwan Abbasi was not present in the courtroom. When asked by the judge in that regard, his assistant lawyer informed the court that Rizwan Abbasi was in the Supreme Court and requested for some time.

Subsequently, the court directed Rizwan Abbasi to appear before the it by 10:30 a.m.

The court then asked the assistant lawyer to consult with Rizwan Abbasi and clarify their intent on pursuing the case.

The assistant lawyer responded that they wanted that the case be transferred to another court, because the plaintiff was not satisfied with the proceedings in his court.

The judge inquired about the reason and requested him to furnish concrete evidence in support of his arguments.

Pakistan Armed Forces pay tribute to martyrs on UN Peacekeeping Day

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Pakistan Armed Forces on Wednesday paid tribute to its martyrs who had rendered the ultimate sacrifice while serving as UN peacekeepers in conflict-hit countries across the world on the International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

"Today, Pakistan joins the international community in commemorating the International Peacekeepers Day, paying tribute to the brave men and women who have served in the United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world," an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

Pakistan, the ISPR said, was one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping, with around 3,000 peacekeepers currently serving in missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Abyei, Central African Republic, Cyprus, Western Sahara and Somalia.

It added that since 1960, Pakistan had contributed 235,000 troops to the UN peacekeeping operations in 48 United Nations missions in 29 countries including almost all continents of the world.



Federal Minister for Communications, Investment Board and Privatization, Abdul Aleem Khan met with Prime Minister of Tajikistan, Kokhir Rasulzoda in Dushanbe.

Pakistan ready to cooperate with regional countries in economic, trade sectors: Aleem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister of Communications, Investment Board and Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan, who is on visit to Tajikistan, held a meeting with Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda in Dushanbe and discussed with him matters of bilateral relations and important issues.

While welcoming the federal minister, the Prime Minister of Tajikistan Kokhir Rasulzoda reiterated that the doors of Tajikistan will always be open for bilateral cooperation for Pakistan, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

Aleem Khan thanked the Prime Minister of Tajikistan and said that the two countries are historically bound in religious and

cultural ties and in future this relationship can be further strengthened by the promotion of trade activities. Earlier, while addressing the International Conference at Dushanbe, the federal minister said that Pakistan was ready to cooperate in all kinds of economic and business activities in the region for which practical work was being done to bring trade corridors to global standards and connect them with other countries.

He said that Pakistan was working on digitizing the "Silk Route Corridor" especially for the countries of Central Asia while also ensuring the implementation of "Right to Monitor" through satellite technology on the roads under construction.



KUALALUMPUR: Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal receiving the APO Meritorious and Distinguished Award 2024 by the Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) in Malaysia.

Acting President, PM express grief 29 people dead, 21 injured in fatal road accident in Washuk

Independent Report
QUETTA: At least 29 people, including women and children, were killed and 21 others injured after a passenger bus turned turtle and plunged into a ditch in Basima area of Washuk district on Wednesday morning.

According to the reports reaching here, about 21 people sustained injuries in the accident and have been moved to the Civil Hospital in Basima from where at least 11 were moved to Quetta.

The initial reports suggested that the accident took place after the tyre of the passenger bus burst, said the rescue officials. The ill-fated passenger bus was travelling from Turbat to Quetta carrying over 50 passengers.

The levies and local administration rushed towards the spot of accident. The bodies and injured persons were retrieved from the bus and

shifted to the civil hospitals of Basima, Panjur and Khuzdar.

Later, the seriously injured persons were brought to Quetta by the air ambulance and shifted to CMH Quetta for treatment where condition of few patients is stated to be precarious.

Balochistan's Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti offered his condolences over the loss of lives in the horrific accident and prayed for those who were wounded.

In two similar incidents in May, 13 people belonging to the same family were killed and nine others got wounded as a truck plunged into a ditch in Punjab's Khushab district. The accident occurred because of a brake failure on Panj Pir Manawan Road in Khushab, consequently, the truck driver lost control of the vehicle and it fell into the ditch.

Ahsan honoured by APO for outstanding contributions to socio-economic development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiative Prof. Ahsan Iqbal received an award from the Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) Kuala Lumpur for his outstanding contribution to socio-economic development efforts through policy, strategic thinking, effective leadership and management.

He received the award at the 66th meeting of the Governing Body of the Asian Productivity Organisation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia as the organization includes 21 countries, including Pakistan, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives.

Establishment piling up pressure on state institutions, PTI says after iddat ruling delay

ISLAMABAD (INP): A delay in the ruling on the un-Islamic nikah case has apparently shattered Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) hopes of the early release of its founder Imran Khan from prison.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday, PTI Information Secretary Raouf Hasan said state institutions were trying to keep the party founder behind bars despite him securing bail in several cases.

"Establishment's pressure on state institutions is piling up," he stated while reacting to the delay in the announcement of a reserved verdict in the iddat case against the PTI founder and his wife Bushra Bibi by an Islamabad sessions court earlier today. The

Islamabad court had reserved the verdict last week on appeals filed by the PTI founder and his wife against their conviction in the iddat case. However, District and Sessions Judge Sharukh Arjmand sought his recusal from the case because it would not be appropriate for him to announce the verdict owing to repeated expression of no-confidence by Khawar Manika, Bushra's ex-husband and the petitioner in the case.

In the presser today, the PTI spokesperson said the party has been witnessing "murder of justice" for the last two years and expressed fears that the former prime minister would have to spend more time in jail.

Govt cracks down on smuggling, hoarding with zero tolerance policy

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant crackdown on smuggling, hoarding, and power pilferage, the government has made substantial progress in its zero-tolerance policy, yielding impressive results.

Since September last year, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been instrumental in facilitating the recovery of billions of rupees and scores of arrests, PTV reported. In a major anti-smuggling operation, authorities foiled the smuggling and illegal movement of 3,036 metric tons of fertilizer.

Additionally, 281 metric tons of wheat and flour were seized from smugglers, preventing the smuggling of essential items.

The government's efforts have also led to the seizure of 34,640 metric tons of sugar, putting an end to illegal profiteering.

Furthermore, authorities recovered 2,503 metric tons of wheat, 56,948 metric tons of ghee, and 10,379 metric tons of sugar from market price manipulators.



Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov arrives in Islamabad. He was received at the Islamabad International Airport by Additional Foreign Secretary (Afghanistan and West Asia) Ahmed Naseem Warraich.

Economy improves as indicators stay positive

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the fiscal year 2023-24 is nearing a close, the economy of the country has been showing signs of resilience and growth as indicated by key economic indicators, the finance ministry said in a recent report released here Wednesday.

"As the fiscal year is about to end, the economic indicators demonstrate the strengthening of stability in the real, fiscal and external sectors," according to the Monthly Economic Update and Outlook for May 2024.

According to the report, GDP growth is elevating while inflation rates are on a decline with a positive primary balance, reflecting the effectiveness of recent fiscal consolidation efforts.

The economic performance also indicates that agriculture has been a major contributor to this fiscal year's economic upswing, registering a growth of 6.25 per cent. The agri-

culture sector's recovery is mainly attributed to government initiatives through improved input supply and increased credit disbursement to farmers.

Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) growth in 2024 Quarter 3, became positive and is expected to remain moderately positive on average throughout the second half of the current fiscal year. It witnessed a minor decline of 0.1 per cent during July-March FY 2024 against the contraction of 7.0 per cent same period last year. During this period, 11 to 22 sectors witnessed positive growth.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation stood at 17.3 per cent on a year-on-year basis in April 2024 as compared to 36.4 per cent in April 2023. The major drivers include housing, water, electricity, gas & fuel, perishable food items, furnishing & household equipment maintenance, clothing, footwear and transport.



KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf activists hold a protest demonstration for the release of Imran Khan outside the Karachi Press Club.

Rubina Khalid reaffirms federal govt commitment to alleviate poverty in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Rubina Khalid Wednesday reaffirmed the federal government's dedication to alleviate poverty in Balochistan by providing substantial economic support to the women of the province. This announcement was made during a high-level meeting with key stakeholders to discuss the coordination and implementation of BISP initiatives in Balochistan.

The meeting was attended by Secretary IT Ayaz Khan Mandukhel, Secretary Industries Noor Ahmed Perkan, Secretary Colleges Hafiz Tahir, DG Benazir Income Support Programme Abdul Jabbar, and other relevant officials.

The discussion centered on enhancing the effectiveness of BISP in the province and introducing new initiatives aimed at poverty reduction.

Rubina Khalid stated that her visit was in accordance with the directives of the President of Paki-

stan, Asif Ali Zardari, who has shown a keen interest in the welfare of Balochistan. "The President has instructed us to pay special attention to the needs of Balochistan, particularly focusing on the economic empowerment of its women," she emphasized. Highlighting the importance of vocational training, Rubina Khalid announced the launch of a vocational training program designed to equip both women and men in Balochistan with the skills necessary for sustainable livelihoods.

"This program is a testament to our commitment to providing quality training that meets global standards, ensuring that the people of Balochistan are well-prepared to compete in the modern workforce," she added.

Rubina Khalid also outlined the need for improving various sectors to combat poverty effectively. She called for enhanced efforts in processing, packaging, livestock management, and healthcare services.

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First steps

It is, without doubt, a positive development. The chief minister of KP seems to have reached an arrangement that will allow him to stick to his party's politics while he works with Islamabad on matters related to the governance and administration of his province.

In the context of present-day politics in Pakistan, this is no mean feat. There has been considerable tension between the centre and KP — the only province where the PTI managed to seize power and form a government — ever since the general elections.

From reserved seats to provincial funds, an electricity supply crisis and non-invitation to the Special Investment Facilitation Council meetings, Peshawar has clashed bitterly with the government in Islamabad, demanding that its 'rights' be restored and that it be given a seat at the table. However, from recent developments, it appears that the federal and provincial governments have finally managed to break the ice.

On Saturday, KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur finally attended the SIFC meeting to which he had previously not been invited, and it seems to have gone well. The federal information minister later issued a glowing appraisal of the development, stating, "I think today's meeting was held in a very cordial atmosphere with great positivity [...] I think the good thing is that a message of unity was sent after today's SIFC meeting that the centre and the provinces are on one page."

Mr Gandapur, too, described it as "a very good meeting", while iterating that his province's resources should benefit both its residents and the larger country. He promptly apprised his party chief, Imran Khan, of the discussion in a visit to Adiala Jail. Then, on Monday, the KP chief minister also managed to reach an understanding with the ministers of interior and power over his province's power issues, signalling a shift away from his government's confrontational stance.

Both parties said they had arrived at a mutually acceptable solution to address prolonged loadshedding in the province, which seems to be rooted in rampant power theft. Signalling his commitment to mobilising his own party to lead the initiative, the KP CM revealed that the federal government, too, would play a part by extending some relief and relaxations. When asked what prompted the sudden thaw, Mr Gandapur deftly explained that his discussion with the two representatives of the federal government was a negotiation between institutions rather than a parley between individuals or the politics they represented.

This is a commendable approach. There is no reason why ordinary people should suffer because of the differences between their leaders. It is mature of the KP government to set aside its differences for the good of its people, and one hopes that this small change will pave the way for bigger things.

World War III?

Mahir Ali

The president of Ukraine has lately devoted a great deal of his energy to soliciting international attendance at a supposed peace conference scheduled to be held in Switzerland in mid-June. He is particularly keen on the participation of Joe Biden and Xi Jinping. Vladimir Putin has not been invited.

Kyiv's idea is to persuade the Global South to ditch its purported neutrality and help persuade Moscow to end the war it launched more than two years ago. Convincing China to reassess its alignment with Russia would be the biggest prize, but that is almost certainly out of reach for now — the same could probably be said about the bulk of nations economically (or politically) reliant on China or Russia.

Thanks largely to China and India, among others, as well as a stepped-up military industry, the Russian economy has not tanked because of Western sanctions: earlier this year, the IMF predicted a 3.2 per cent growth rate, higher than what lies in store for Britain, France and Germany. What's more, many of the Western imports coveted by the Russian elite that helps to sustain Putin flow in via Dubai and other such entrepôts. It is unlikely that recent Western initiatives to deploy frozen Russian assets in the aid of Ukraine will make much difference.

Nor can a peace conference that excludes Russia produce a meaningful result. Putin would not anyhow have accepted an invitation without an embarrassing Swiss assurance of immunity for the duration of the conference, given the International Criminal Court's warrant against him from last year for the war crime of transferring

Ukrainian children to Russia. It could even be argued that he has committed far worse crimes both within Russia and on its periphery. What stands out, however, is the Western hypocrisy in hailing Putin's indictment while placing Benjamin Netanyahu — whose regime has slaughtered children, rather than transporting them to Israel — on a pedestal of impunity, and hence immunity in the face of an ICC warrant.

It would appear that the Western-designed 'rule of law' applies chiefly to Russia and China. The US and its close allies are exempt from this much-ballyhooed standard of civilisation. A vengeful killing spree by Israel apparently does not violate those norms. An International Court of Justice injunction against deadly operations in Rafah cannot be supported, even though it echoes similar suggestions by the US and many of its allies — perhaps because they had factored in the unlikelihood of the Netanyahu administration heeding their pleas.

Were the West so inclined, switching off military supplies to Israel would help to stem the hostilities in Gaza and the West Bank. Ukraine is a far trickier proposition. For all its foibles, Kyiv isn't the aggressor. Russia's historical paranoia about influence, infiltration or aggression from the West, even when combined with EU and US efforts to woo Kyiv, cannot even begin to justify its military assault and the subsequent war of attrition.

Fortuitously, the attempted invasion initially went badly for Russia, but lately the tide appears to have turned — to the extent that the US and Nato are considering openly deploying 'military trainers' within Ukraine, and Washington is debating

whether to allow US-supplied weapons to target Russian territory. That seems like a potent recipe for facilitating a third world war, regardless of who lobs the first missile.

Putin has lately purged his defence hierarchy, ostensibly on grounds of corruption (and incompetence). Volodymyr Zelensky has done the same now and then, recently purging his personal bodyguard amid suspicions of a plot to assassinate him as a gift to Putin on the eve of the latter's unimpeachable inauguration as president. Such indications serve as a reminder that both countries have much in common, beyond the historical connections absurdly exaggerated by Putin and crudely under-emphasised by Kyiv's rulers. There have been indications that some territorial concessions — Crimea and the Donbas region, for instance — would quench Putin's thirst for expansion. Back when the Soviet Union was intact, which region belonged to which constituent republic did not matter much. Potential geographical disputes ought to have been settled before the USSR split up in 1991, but the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian architects of its demise were in too much of a hurry to worry about such niceties.

Among others, Xi Jinping and Pope Francis both reckon that reasonable territorial concessions would be an acceptable price to pay for peace. Reports suggest that Donald Trump — once and, appallingly, possibly the future US president — does not disagree. Zelensky and most other Ukrainians would understandably question the idea of rewarding aggression. But is there a feasible alternative for ensuring more Ukrainians don't perish? — Courtesy Dawn

Termination limits

Parvez Rahim

There is an acute misconception that employers in Pakistan possess an unrestricted right to hire and fire their workers. The phrase 'hire and fire' is used primarily to denote the employers' unfettered right to sack workers. On the other hand, the idea of unlimited hiring is laudable as it provides employment to the populace.

The 'right' to anything is only derived from the law and not assumed by people. In labour laws, the provisions relating to the termination of workers' employment are governed by the Industrial and Commercial Employment (Standing Orders) Ordinance, 1968. Following the devolution in 2010, this ordinance was re-enacted and promulgated by all the provinces but with minimal amendments. SO 1 (Section 2) classifies the workman in six categories: permanent, probationers, badlis, temporary, apprentices and contract worker. SO 12 provides the mode of termination of workmen other than the apprentices and the contract workers.

A probationer is provisionally employed for a period of three months to fill a permanent vacancy. A badli is appointed in the post of a temporarily absent workman. A temporary workman is engaged for provisional work, which is scheduled for completion within a nine-month period. The apprenticeship conditions are governed by the Apprenticeship Ordinance, 1962, including the termination of contract. The contract worker works on a contract basis for a specific period but the law is silent on his termination before the stipulated period ends.

Under SO 12 (2), the services of temporary workmen, badlis and

probationers may be terminated without notice. However, the written order of termination should explicitly state the reason for the action taken. SO 12 (5) provides that the services of a permanent or a temporary workman shall not be terminated on grounds of misconduct "otherwise than in the manner prescribed in SO 15".

SO 12 also contains the provision for 'termination simpliciter' in certain conditions. The services of a permanent workman may be terminated for "any reason other than misconduct" with a month's notice or payment of one month's salary in lieu of the notice. In Punjab, Sindh and KP, the employers are required to pay a month's salary, whereas in Balochistan, three months' salary has to be paid.

Contrary to what the title implies, it becomes difficult for the employers to invoke 'termination simpliciter' as there is little reason to do so other than for misconduct. However, termination on the pretext of misconduct, carried out in the garb of termination simpliciter, is reversed by the labour court and the petitioner reinstated.

SO 12 also stipulates that "a workman shall be entitled to receive the amount standing to his credit in the provident fund, including the contributions of the employer to such fund, even if he resigns or is dismissed from service".

SO 15 is the most important provision of the ordinance of 1968 with a list of offences constituting misconduct. A workman accused of misconduct is required to explain the charges levelled against him. If the employer is not satisfied with the explanation, he will ask the latter to appear before a domestic inquiry and his

services will only be terminated if the complaint against him is declared valid.

The ordinance also prescribes procedures for the closure of establishment (SO 11-A) and retrenchment of workers (SO 13). In the case of closure, the employer cannot terminate more than 50 per cent of the workmen without prior permission from the labour court. In the context of retrenchment, the employer is to retrench the last person employed in a category.

While the aforesaid terms prove that the employers do not have unrestrained powers to terminate the services of their workers, aggrieved personnel face numerous impediments in their pursuit of reinstatement. At the outset, they need a lawyer conversant with labour cases and laws to pursue their cases before the court. People who have never witnessed the functioning of courts are often fearful of appearing before a judge. Besides, cases are adjourned frequently for various reasons.

Since 2018, I have visited the court 10 to 15 times for cross-examination by the petitioners' lawyers on my affidavit filed before the court, but this is yet to take place. Such inordinate delays may not cause any difficulties for resourceful managements, but victimised parties suffer immensely as the process is expensive and time consuming.

Therefore, only the expeditious delivery of justice can pave the way for labour litigation to become consequential and beneficial for wronged employees. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Jam Kamal says: Govt all set to resolve rising production costs, industry issues

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has said that the government has devised a well-tailored, well-thought-out and doable strategy to overcome rising production cost issue for the sake of promotion of manufacturing sector in the country.

"A conducive business environment would be ensured to cut

unemployment and promote the SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises)," he said while talking to the business community here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Wednesday.

He said that it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Commerce to maintain contact with the business community to understand and resolve their issues. He

emphasised that the government's top priority was addressing challenges related to trade, export, import, manufacturing, and tariff competitiveness. Additionally, issues like circular debt, the IMF conditions, and the inefficiency of various institutions, which burden consumers, needed to be tackled. He promised that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had guaranteed the

involvement of relevant stakeholders in addressing economic issues. LCCI President Kashif Anwar welcomed the Minister and highlighted the challenges being faced by the business community including inflation, depreciating currency, rising costs of electricity, gas, fuel, high-interest rates, MDI charges, axle load laws, and increased cargo delivery charges.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan addressing during his visit to Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



QUETTA: A delegation of Zhoib led by President Anjuman Tajiran Zhoib Hakeem Khan Mandokhail meeting with Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Punjab govt to offer better incentives to Chinese investors: Ch Shafay

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Industries, Commerce & Investment Chaudhry Shafay Hussain has assured All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) of offering better incentives to attract Chinese investors to boost apparel exports through industrial parks in the province.

"A mechanism is being evolved to ensure no change in policy irrespective of the coming in or going out of any government," he said, adding that the Punjab government would also ensure full scale security for the Chinese investors working in the province.

He visited APTMA Lahore office along with the provincial government's delegation including Javed Iqbal, Chairman PIEDMC,

Jalal Hassan Chief Executive Officer Punjab Investment Board, and Asif Ali Farrukh, DG Industries to get a briefing on the proposed industrial parks in Punjab. APTMA (North) Chairman Kamran Arshad, Senior Vice Chairman Asad Shafi, Vice Chairman Ahmed Shafi, former Chairman of the Association Abdul Rahim Nasir, Executive member Anjum Zafar, Muhammad Ali and Secretary General Mohammad Raza Baqir welcomed the delegation on the occasion.

The Minister informed that Punjab Chief Minister has recently set up a high-powered committee to examine and understand the best practices across the world in general.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where two ships, Maersk Valencia and PVT Venusearrying Container and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Atlantic Ibis, MSC Positano and Milaha Raslaffan carrying Container and LNG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today.

A total of 09 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a Bulk cargo carrier 'Sunny Bay' left the port on today morning while five more ships, Sea Steller, Atlantic Ibis, PVT Venus, Blue Bird and Maersk Valencia are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Pak consul general discusses with New York mayor need to boost trade, investment

NEW YORK (APP): Pakistani Consul General in New York, Aamer Ahmed Atozai, Tuesday held "fruitful" discussions with City's Mayor Eric Adams that focused on the potential for increasing trade and investment between Pakistan and New York, one of the biggest and wealthiest American city.

The two officials met during a breakfast hosted by Mayor Adam for foreign consuls at his residence. The event was organized by the Society of Foreign Consuls in New York, a

signature organization uniting foreign consuls in world largest consular corps.

"Our discussions were productive," Atozai, the Pakistani consul general, said after his exchange of views with the mayor.

"We are committed to deepening our cooperation in various sectors to benefit both our communities," he added. New York City, a metropolis of 8.8 million people, hosts the United Nations Headquarters and is often called the 'world capital'.

Speakers call for removing bottlenecks for promoting oil, gas sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers at a conference while highlighting the importance of deregulation of the petroleum sector, on Wednesday stressed the need for removing bottlenecks for promoting oil and gas sectors in the country.

They were of the view that all stakeholders, government and regulators should set together and devise a concrete strategy in the larger national interest of the country.

The Oil and Gas

Conference Pakistan (OGCP-2024), organized by Energy Update in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) and the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA).

Speaking on the occasion, Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) Chairman Masroor Khan said that OGRA was providing facilities to the industry through OGRA regulatory framework.

Pakistan eyes on ramped-up CPEC cooperation with China to grow local economy

BEIJING (APP): Chinese experts said that the continuously strengthened cooperation in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is poised to foster greater economic development momentum in Pakistan. It will also create new market potential for Chinese businesses.

The remarks were made as China and Pakistan recently unveiled five new

corridors under CPEC, while Pakistani officials have reportedly expressed hope to revitalize cooperation within the BRI framework to bolster the country's stagnating economy.

The identified five new corridors for the second phase of the CPEC include the Growth Corridor, the Economic Development Projects Corridor, the Innovation Corridor, the Green

Corridor, and the Regional Connectivity Corridor.

At a high-level meeting, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the revival of projects in Gwadar and the newly identified corridor programs were the latest progress made under CPEC, which he hailed as a milestone in Pakistan-China friendship, laying a robust foundation for bilateral cooperation.

Southwest China launches new air cargo route to Pakistan

BEIJING (APP): A new air cargo route was launched linking southwest China's Guizhou Province and Pakistan's largest city Karachi. Marking the official start of the air route, an all-cargo plane carrying 6 tonnes of freight, including clothing, electronic products and other commodities, took off from Guiyang, capital of Guizhou, on Tuesday morning and arrived in Karachi in nearly six hours, Xinhua reported. The plane will return to Guiyang with blue crabs from Pakistan.

Malaysian HC for enhancing bilateral trade up to \$12b

ISLAMABAD (APP): Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan Mohammad Azhar Bin Mazlan Wednesday said that the current volume of bilateral trade between both countries stood at \$1.8 billion as compared to its existing potential of \$12 billion annually.

Addressing the businessmen at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), he said that the current volume of trade between the two countries was less than the mutual

trade potential and that ICCI can play a significant role in its advancement, said a press release.

There are many opportunities for development in the halal industry in Malaysia and Pakistan, in which the private sector of both countries should play their full role by taking tangible steps, he said adding that his country would extend full cooperation to Pakistan to become a regional hub of halal industry.

Governor pledges constitutional role for betterment of province

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has reaffirmed his commitment to play a constitutional role for betterment of the province.

During a meeting at the Governor's House with delegations from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Sargodha, the People's Students Federation (PSF) Punjab, and the PPP Minority Wing, he emphasised the importance of setting aside internal differences to work tirelessly for the country's development and stability. In his address, the governor welcomed the party delegations, stressing that his role transcends party lines and that he serves all of the province. He reiterated that the Governors' House remains accessible to both workers and the general public. "The PPP holds its workers in high esteem," he said, promising that the issues raised by the delegations would be addressed promptly.

Key figures at the meeting included General Secretary PPP Central Punjab Hassan Murtaza, Information Secretary Shehzad Saeed Cheema, Tasneem Qureshi from Sargodha, PSF President Musa Khokhar, and Imran Athwal and Edwin Sohtra from the PPP Minority Wing. The governor's inclusive approach and dedication to public service were well-received by the attendees, underscoring a collective effort towards the province's progress.



LAHORE: Khawaja Jalaluddin Rumi, a well-known industrialist and former president Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, meeting with Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor House.

Pakistan, China ties strengthening with every passing day: KP Minister

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister of Local Government and Regional Development Arshad Ayub Khan on Wednesday said that China was a trusted friend and neighbour of Pakistan. "The 73-year bilateral ties between the two countries are strengthening with every passing day," he said during a ceremony held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa house in Islamabad in connection with the 73-year Pakistan-China Friendship Association.

The minister said that Pakistan should learn from China's experiences for socio-economic development, adding that China has been Pakistan's largest trading partner for eight consecutive years and a network of development projects was being laid between Pakistan and China under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He said both countries share boundaries and good relations between the two nations. The student exchange program would further provide opportunities to the youth besides bringing them closer. The minister said that there were vast investment opportunities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and invited Chinese investors and companies to tap the opportunities.

Dacoit killed, constable injured in police encounter

FAISALABAD (APP): A dacoit was allegedly killed while a police constable sustained injuries during an encounter in the area of Mansoorabad police station. Police spokesman Talish Abbas Jutt said here on Wednesday that dolphin force team signalled three suspects riding on a motorcycle near Abadi 80 Murabba Chak No.203-RB on Sheikhpura Road late Tuesday night but the accused opened fire and injured a constable Ali Raza Cheema.

3 killed over domestic dispute

SARGODHA (APP): At least three people were in firing over a domestic dispute in Kot Momin police station precincts, here on Wednesday. Rescue-1122 Emergency Officer Mazhar Shah said that 25-year-old Maratib, son of Nawaz, 22-year-old Ali Shehbaz, son of Shehzad and 17-year-old Bilal Muneer, son of Muneer Ahmed, resident of Dera Shiekh Saleem, Chak No. 66-SB, had a dispute over some domestic matters.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of representative of South Waziristan Angoor Ada meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.

Kundi directs establishment of NADRA citizens facilitation centres at tehsil level

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi here Wednesday directed the Director General (DG) National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Regional Head Office KP, Khalid Inayatullah to establish citizens facilitation centres at tehsil level to facilitate the local population of the province. The governor passed these directives during a meeting with DG NADRA here at the Governor's House.

The meeting discussed the ongoing CNIC registration campaign from NADRA Mobile Van in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and NADRA services provided to citizens including issuance of CNIC and attestation process. The DG NADRA said that every possible service is being provided to the citizens of KP at NADRA offices and open katcharis (open courts) for the resolution of people's complaints are being arranged in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Besides the establishment of National Registration Centre (NRC) at Panyala in DI Khan, he said that the upgradation of the NRC at Paharpur and the setting up of a new

NRC at Khasoor would provide the best possible services to the area people. The governor directed the establishment of passport offices at NADRA Offices in KP. The governor said residents of rural areas especially senior citizens and women were confronted with problems in the renovation and registration of CNICs and emphasized mobile registration services in the morning and evening in rural areas. He also directed the simplification of collective services including the acquisition of identity cards of NADRA to facilitate people.

Minister says: Entrepreneurship to fortify economy, empower women

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for School Education Rana Sikandar Hayat has said promotion of entrepreneurship is necessary for empowerment of women and stability of the country's economy. He was addressing the 15th post-graduate students' conference, organised by the Punjab University Institute of Education and Research on the theme of 'Education for Entrepreneurship' at Waheed Shaheed Hall, here on Wednesday.

Punjab University (PU) Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood, IER (Institute of Education and Research) Director Prof Dr Tariq Mehmood, Conference Secretary Iffat Alvi, senior faculty members, researchers and a large number of students were present. In his address, Rana Sikandar said that in Bangladesh, India and Malaysia, women were brought forward in every sector to develop the country. He said that students must learn to use technology to promote entrepreneurship. He said that 64 per cent of Pakistan's population consisted of youth; if they were provided with skills along with education, they could take the country far ahead. He said Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was working day and night for development of youth and women. He said that for the high quality of education in the country, it was necessary to make education free from politics.



LAHORE: Former Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider meeting with Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan.

Establishment of South Punjab Secretariat marks new era of progress: ACS

MULTAN (APP): A delegation comprising members of the business and farming communities on Wednesday met Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) South Punjab, Fuad Hashim Rabbani. The delegation was led by Malik Khalid Bhutta, President of Qaumi Tajir Ittehad South Punjab, and Abdul Ghafoor Babar, District President Kisan Ittehad, Muzaffargarh. Other members included, Maqbool Khokhar, Ishfaq Malik, Iqbal Khan and others.

ACS, Rabbani highlighted that the establishment of the South Punjab Secretariat marks a new era of progress and development in the region. He emphasized the focus on agricultural development and increasing literacy rates to eradicate poverty. Rabbani said that the recommendations from international organizations.

Civil Services Academy initiates 'Heat wave mitigation campaign'

LAHORE (APP): The Community Development & Environment Society of Civil Services Academy (CSA) has initiated the 'Heat wave mitigation campaign, aiming to address the challenges, posed by rising temperatures. Two relief camps have been set up as part of the endeavour, each serving a dual purpose of providing refreshments and disseminating vital information on preventive measures. CSA Director General Farhan Aziz Khawaja, Director PS Sadiq Chohan led the campaign which was arranged by Community Development & Environment Society President Talha Rafiq Alam, General Secretary Dr. Aleena Shakeel Nagra and under-training assistant commissioners, here on Wednesday.

01 killed, 6 injured over land dispute

BUREWALA (APP): A person was killed while six others including a woman sustained injuries over brawl between two groups on land dispute in limits of Saddar police. According to details, there was a two kanal land dispute between Lagrial community in Chak No 457/EB on which one group consisted of over 20 armed persons including Malik Asghar Lagrial, Ehsan Lagrial, Muzamil, Farooq and others attacked on opposite group.

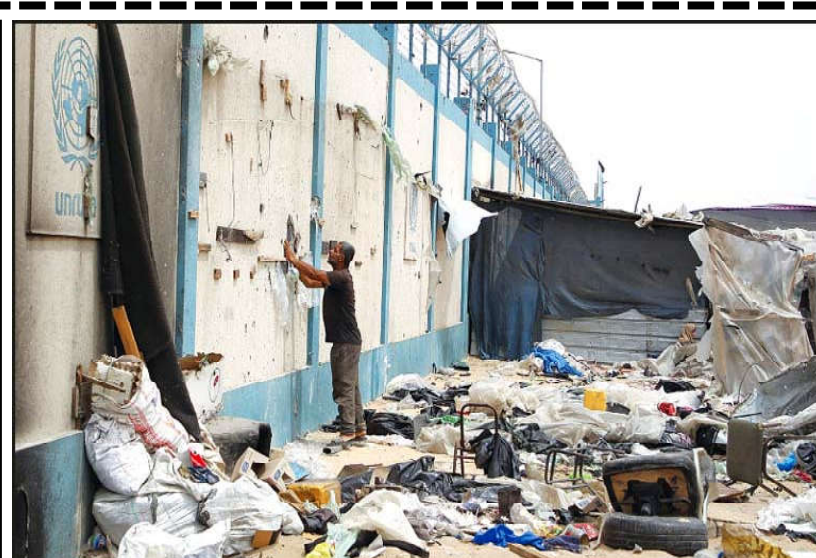
International News

Unrepentant Israel kills 21 in strike on another camp

Monitoring Desk
RAFAH: Another strike on a camp for displaced Palestinians claimed 21 lives on Tuesday, tanks rolled through the centre of the southern Gaza city, which has been a refuge for those fleeing Israeli bombardment. The tank strike in Al Mawasi came a day after a similar deadly attack on a separate tent city in Rafah set off a fire that killed 45 people, incinerating many. Sunday's strike had prompted global outrage and even led to Israeli leaders expressing some remorse about their actions. However, Tuesday's attack indicated that Israel has no intention of changing course or abiding by an

International Court of Justice ruling to stop the offensive in Rafah. In the latest bloodshed, a Gaza civil defence agency official said 21 people were killed in an "occupation strike targeting the tents of displaced people" in west Rafah. In Rafah, residents and a Palestinian security source said Israeli tanks had now penetrated the heart of the southern city. At least 12 of the dead were women, according to medical officials in the Palestinian enclave. But Israel's military later said in a statement: "Contrary to the reports from the last few hours, the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) did not strike in the

Humanitarian Area in Al-Mawasi." Tuesday's incident in Al-Mawasi occurred in an area designated by Israel as an expanded humanitarian zone. Israel had urged Palestinian civilians in Rafah, including around one million displaced by the almost eight-month-old war, to evacuate there when it launched its incursion in early May. In central Rafah, tanks and armoured vehicles mounted with machineguns were spotted near Al-Awda mosque, a city landmark, witnesses told Reuters. The Israeli military said its forces continued to operate in the Rafah area, without commenting on reported advances into the city centre.



RAFAH: A man stands amid scattered belongings of displaced Gazans at a tent camp destroyed by an Israeli strike in the southern Gaza Strip.

Israeli incursion could halt Rafah's last functioning hospital, says WHO

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: A World Health Organisation official said on Tuesday the last hospital in Rafah could stop functioning and a substantial number of deaths could be expected if Israel launches a "full incursion" into the southern Gaza city. "If the incursion would continue, we would lose the last hospital in Rafah," Richard Peepkorn, the WHO representative for Gaza and the West Bank, said on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, as

Mines, unexploded ordnance a daily menace for Afghanistan's children

Monitoring Desk
GHAZNI: The black mushroom cloud had barely faded in Ghazni province before kids clustered around the edge of the crater created by the mine, one of the devices that kills a child every other day in Afghanistan. Afghans have been able to return to fields, schools and roads since the Taliban authorities ended their insurgency and ousted the Western-backed government in 2021.

Volcano in Iceland erupts for fifth time since December

Monitoring Desk
COPENHAGEN: A volcano in southwestern Iceland sent glowing hot lava shooting more than 50 metres into the air on Wednesday, its fifth eruption since December and the most powerful one since its volcanic system became active three years ago. Authorities had warned of the risk of renewed volcanic activity in the area just south of the capital Reykjavik as studies showed magma accumulated underground.

US presses for probe, says ground operation in Rafah not warranted

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Urging Israel to conduct a thorough investigation into a tent city bombing and uphold its obligations under international humanitarian law, the US on Tuesday said it didn't believe a major ground operation in Rafah was warranted. White House spokesperson John Kirby maintained that the Israeli strike that killed dozens of Palestinians in Rafah did not cross a "red line" set by President Joe Biden. "We still don't believe that a major ground operation in Rafah is warranted. We still don't want to see the Israelis, as we say, smash into Rafah with large units over large pieces of territory. We still believe that and we haven't seen that at this point," he told reporters at a White House briefing. "As a result of this strike on Sunday I have no policy changes to speak to," he added. "It just happened. The Israelis are going to investigate it. We're going to be taking great interest in what they find in that investigation. And we'll see where it goes from there." Kirby told reporters Tuesday that there was a real danger that Israel could become further isolated from the international community with the manner in which it is conducting operations. "So this is of concern, clearly, because it's not in Israel's best interest," Kirby said.

Israel says Gaza war likely to last another seven months

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Israel sent tanks on raids into Rafah on Wednesday and predicted its war on Hamas in Gaza would continue all year, after Washington said the Rafah assault did not amount to a major ground operation that would trigger a change in US policy. Israeli tanks moved into the heart of Rafah for the first time on Tuesday, despite an order from the International Court of Justice to end its attacks on the city, where many Palestinians had taken refuge from bombardment elsewhere. The World Court said Israel had not explained how it would keep evacuees from Rafah safe and provide food, water and medicine. Its ruling also called on Hamas to release hostages taken from Israel on Oct. 7 immediately and unconditionally.

Rafah residents said Israeli tanks had pushed into Tel Al-Sultan in the west and Yibna and near Shaboura in the centre before retreating towards a buffer zone on the border with Egypt, rather than staying put as they have in other offensives. "We received distress calls from residents in Tel Al-Sultan where drones targeted displaced citizens as they moved from areas where they were staying toward the safe areas," the deputy director of ambulance and emergency services in Rafah, Haitham al Hams, said. Palestinian health officials said 19 civilians had been killed in Israeli air strikes and shelling across Gaza. Israel accuses Hamas militants of hiding among civilians, which the militants deny.



Polish Minister of Defence Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz presents details of "East Shield", a 10 billion zloty (\$2.55 billion) program to beef up defenses along its eastern border with Belarus and Russia, in Warsaw, Poland.

South Africa gears up for 'most unpredictable' vote

Monitoring Desk
JOHANNESBURG: South Africans on Tuesday braced for an 'evenly matched' general election, which may loosen the ruling ANC's 30-year grip on power. Numerous voters now seem to be fed up with unemployment, crime and corruption. For the second day running, 1.6 million "special voters" including the elderly, essential workers, police and prisoners, were permitted to cast early ballots. The rest of South Africa's 27-million-strong

registered electorate will be called forth on Wednesday, to elect the provincial legislatures and a new national parliament. The national parliament will then hand-pick the countries new president. For the first time since the advent of democracy, the African National Congress risks losing its outright majority. The ANC may be forced to negotiate, to form a coalition government. "This is certainly South Africa's most unpredictable election since 1994" says a political analyst, Daniel Silke.

Trump's lawyers brand hush money case 'lies'

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: Defence lawyers in Donald Trump's hush money trial made their final pitch to the jury on Tuesday, insisting the first ever criminal prosecution of a former US president was based on "lies". Meanwhile, a federal judge refused a request by prosecutors to impose a gag order barring Trump from making inflammatory comments about law enforcement, after his campaign falsely claimed the FBI was authorised to assassinate him during its search of his Florida estate. Trump is accused of falsifying business records to reimburse his lawyer, Michael Cohen, for a \$130,000 payment to porn star Stormy Daniels, when her account of a 2006 sexual encounter could have doomed his 2016 presidential campaign.

Iran's Khamenei seeks trusted hardliner to replace Raisi in June vote

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Iran fires the starting gun this week on an election to replace President Ebrahim Raisi, whose death in a helicopter crash could complicate efforts by the authorities to manage a task of even greater consequence - the succession to the supreme leader. Once seen as a possible successor to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's ageing ultimate decision-maker, Raisi's sudden death has triggered a race among hardliners to influence the

selection of Iran's next leader. Khamenei, 85, seeks a fiercely loyal president in the June 28 election to run the country day-to-day and be a trusted ally who can ensure stability, amid manoeuvring over the eventual succession to his own position, insiders and analysts say. "The next president is likely to be a hardliner unwaveringly loyal to Khamenei with a background in the Revolutionary Guards.

PM lauds Blue Helmets' contributions to peace on UN Peacekeepers Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the world community observed the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on Wednesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to their services saying that the UN missions had been critical in maintaining peace and protecting civilians in conflict zones.

According to the United Nations, since 1948, more than two million uniformed and civilian personnel have helped countries in transition from war to peace. Today, more than 70,000 peacekeepers serve in 11 missions deployed in hotspots around the world.

Besides paying tribute to the service and sacrifice of peacekeepers, the Day also honours more than 4,000 peacekeepers who have lost their lives serv-

ing for peace. Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed special gratitude for the Pakistani peacekeepers who had made significant contributions.

"230,000 military personnel, including our brave Pakistani female peacekeepers, have made the nation proud for 64 years of our commitment to the UN peacekeeping. Among these were 181 martyrs who sacrificed their lives for global peace, we also pay tribute to them. Their selfless act of courage and sacrifice will forever be etched in our hearts," he wrote on his X timeline.

The prime minister reiterated Pakistan's commitment to its pursuit of peace and justice and to building a future "where peace prevails and humanity thrives."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic, Ulanbek Totuaev briefing the representatives of Media on the ongoing security situation in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic at the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic, in the Federal Capital.

15 years of injustice; global community called upon to investigate Shopian tragedy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Justice continues to elude families of Shopian double rape and murder victims despite the passage of fifteen years.

According to a report released by Kashmir Media Service on the 15th anniversary of Shopian rape and double murder incident on Wednesday, the victims Aasiya and Neelofar were abducted, raped and subsequently killed by the men in uniform in Shopian and their bodies were found from a nullah on the intervening night of 29th and 30th May 2009.

The harrowing incident, where the victims were abducted, raped, and subsequently killed by men

in uniform in Shopian, serves as a grim reminder of the brutalities inflicted by Indian troops in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

This tragic event stands as a testament to the institutionalized and structured violence that India perpetrates in the region. The report highlights the use of harassment, torture, and rape of Kashmiri women as tools to suppress the legitimate demand for a plebiscite. Shockingly, it reveals that since 1990, there have been 11,263 reported cases of rape, gang-rape, disgrace, and molestation by Indian troops, paramilitary, and police personnel in IIOJK.



ISLAMABAD: The mobile unit of Islamabad Traffic Police meet Managing Director Associated Press of Pakistan, Muhammad Asim Khichi after concluding a day-long facilitation process of licence renewal for APP employees at the APP Headquarters.

CPEC second phase to be successful with best dividends ahead: Sen Mushahid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Chairman Senate Defence Committee, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed on Wednesday said the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project's second phase would be successful as its best dividends would be received in the coming years.

He was addressing the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the PCI jointly organised high-level policy dialogue on "Reforms Agenda for CPEC 2.0: Opportunities and the Way Forward" under its Green CPEC Alliance.

Mushahid Hussain said CPEC is the pillar of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched by President Xi Jinping which is undoubtedly the diplomatic and development initiative of the century encompassing Asia, Africa and beyond.

The BRI, he said has brought nations of the world together, whereas CPEC is the manifestation of Chinese confidence in Pakistan as China came to help Pakistan at a critical stage when the country barely had any other nation's support.

"Pakistan and China want to be the regional hub of connectivity from North to South and East to West

that has contrasting visions of connectivity and cooperation that includes all and conversely there is a negative vision of new cold war and curtailment, and we reject that vision as 21st century cannot support zero minus sum vision. It's connectivity and CPEC is the way forward. The next decade will be more successful as the best part of the CPEC is yet to come," he said.

On this occasion, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said Pakistan and China can collaborate for exploring the untapped potential of "Green Minerals" under the CPEC's second phase as it is the future fuel of the world.

Dr Suleri said that the country needs to consider challenges along with the opportunities as both have a common denominator of extreme weather and climate change across the region and the world. The revised trade regime is another challenge after the implementation of Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) by the European Union (EU) to report carbon emissions in the supply chain of its exports whereas US and China are working on it, he said.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain in a meeting with the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, H.E. Yerzhan Kistafin.

Randhawa orders comprehensive upgrade plan for I'abad centers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, called for a plan on Wednesday to upgrade all centers in Islamabad, including Jinnah Super.

During his visit to Jinnah Super Market, the chairman assessed the various facilities at Jinnah Super Market, F-7.

Muhammad Ali inspected the underground parking plazas at the market.

"Built with million of rupees, these parking plazas should be made fully operational immediately," he added.

He emphasized the need to utilize the parking plazas by ensuring the availability of necessary facilities.

Illicit cigarettes worth around Rs202m destroyed in Jhelum Zone

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Jhelum Zone of Regional Tax Office, Rawalpindi on Wednesday destroyed a massive quantity of illicit, smuggled and counterfeit cigarettes worth Rs 202 million, including Rs 147.15 million in evaded duties.

A ceremony for destruction of massive quantity of illicit/smuggled/counterfeit cigarettes was held by the Jhelum Zone of Regional Tax Office, Rawalpindi, said a news release.

The ceremony was organized for the destruction of about 2700 packets of illicit cigarettes including non-duty paid and smuggled cigarettes at Chak Barahm, Jhelum.

Pakistan strives to preserve Buddha heritage, spreading its peaceful message: Jamy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Secretary Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Nasir Hassan Jamy on Wednesday said that Pakistan was spearheading the efforts to preserve and protect the Buddha heritage and had also accelerated the efforts to spread the peaceful message of Buddha and Silk Road.

The federal secretary, in his opening remarks at the third session of the two-day symposium titled "From Gandhara to the World: The Legacy of Gandharan Buddhism" held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here, said that Pakistan placed a great emphasis on tracing the roots of Buddhism in Pakistan and other countries.

The two-day event brought together religious leaders and experts from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, besides scholars, diplomats, historians and art enthusiasts to provide them a platform to exchange ideas and foster connections.

He said the ancient Gandhara civilization left indelible footprints in the realm of art, architecture, culture and spirituality with Lord Buddha being its central figure having an odyssey of spreading knowledge, wisdom, peace and harmony.

Jamy said that besides introducing Buddhism to China and the greater part of East Asia, Gandhara civilization also contributed to embellishing the rich cultural tapestry of modern Pakistan.

He said that Gandhara civilization also led to the early linkages between Pa-



ISLAMABAD: A view of the Panel taking part in the first session of the conference titled "National Street Children Conference - I am Somebody" under the auspices of Muslim Hands and Madaan at a local hotel.

Ambassador Reza expresses gratitude to Pakistan for support after tragic helicopter crash

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam expressed deep gratitude to the Pakistani people, political figures, and government for their condolences and unwavering support following a devastating helicopter crash that claimed the lives of Iran's President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hussain Amirabdollahian and other companions.

Addressing a condolence reference the other day, Ambassador Reza said the Islamic world was collectively grieving this profound loss, with millions participating in funeral prayers across various cit-

ISSI concludes MoU with Turkiye's Yunus Emre Enstitusu

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Yunus Emre Enstitusu, Turkiye for further strengthening its international collaboration here on Wednesday. The MoU signing ceremony included the participation of the Turkish Ambassador, Mehmet Pacaci; Coordinator of Yunus Emre Enstitusu; Turkiye, Dr Halil Tokar, Ambassador of Pakistan in Ankara; Dr Yousaf Junaid, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood; Director CAMEA, Amina Khan; and Team CAMEA, a news release said.

While giving her introductory remarks, Amina Khan said that this MoU is a testament to the long-standing relationship between Pakistan and Turkiye which is built on mutual respect and shared history. Collaboration between ISSI and the Yunus Emre Enstitusu is a step towards further enhancing as well as opening new avenues for cultural and academic cooperation between the two countries.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, welcomed the conclusion of the MoU stating that it will lead to further fortifying the relationship which goes back centuries and is underpinned by cultural and religious affinities as well as shared history. He added that Pakistan and Turkiye are two indispensable partners and that initiatives such as these further reinforce the efforts of the two governments to further deepen their multifaceted partnership. He concluded by saying that effective implementation of this MoU will provide a range of opportunities.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in construction work of flyover at under construction 10th Avenue during development work in Federal Capital.

PCFA-KP celebrates 73rd anniversary of Sino-Pak diplomatic relations

ISLAMABAD: Sino Pakistan Relations are new heights.....The Pakistan-China Friendship Association (PCFA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province Pakistan organised an event at KP House Islamabad to celebrate the 73rd anniversary.

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani Secretary-General PCFA mentioned that understanding the dynamics of Chinese socio economic development is very important for us (Pakistan) being a close friend.

In a testament to their enduring friendship, Pakistan and China celebrated the 73rd anniversary of their diplomatic relations this morning at KP House, Islamabad. The event, or-



ganized by the Pakistan China Friendship Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (PCFA KP), underscored the deep-rooted ties and mutual cooperation between the two nations.

Mr. Arshad Ayub Khan, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Department, highlighted the significance

Clue of missing poet Ahmad Farhad found, police show his arrest

ISLAMABAD (Online): Poet and journalist Ahmad Farhad who is missing from Islamabad since last 15 days has been traced as federal government has shown his arrest.

The case regarding recovery of poet Ahmad Farhad came up for hearing before Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani of Islamabad High Court (IHC) Wednesday.

Imaan Mazari advocate appeared in the court on behalf of wife of poet Ahmad Farhad.

Attorney General (AG) represented federal government.

During the hearing AG Mansoor Usman told the court Ahmad Farhad is arrested and is in the custody of AJK police.

The AG presented report of police station Dhir



ISLAMABAD: Students of Government College University, Faisalabad visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House.

PTA conducts QoS survey in 16 cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) on Wednesday has conducted an Independent Quality of Service (QoS) Survey in sixteen cities across Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to measure the performance of Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs).

Survey routes covered main roads, service roads, and various sectors, with 2,270 kilometers traveled per CMO over 60 days said a news release. Mobile handsets in auto-detect mode were used for voice calls, SMS, and mobile broadband/data sessions.

The survey included 0.25 million mobile broad-

band tests, 45,000 calls and SMS tests, and 0.13 million Ookla speed tests using advanced QoS monitoring tools, ensuring compliance with NGMS licenses and the Cellular Mobile Network QoS Regulations 2021.

CMOs were ranked based on compliance with key performance indicators (KPIs) in mobile network coverage and voice services, from 1st to 4th positions. In the mobile broadband speed segment, rankings were determined by data download/upload speeds, network latency, and web page loading times. Jazz, Ufone, and Zong jointly secured 1st place in mobile network coverage, while Zong led in mobile broadband speed (Ookla).

I'abad Police education float actively providing awareness to citizens

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police's education wing float continues its awareness campaign on traffic rules and road safety through a float.

According to the details, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police has launched an awareness campaign on traffic rules and road safety in the federal capital.

As part of this initiative, a special education float from the Islamabad

of this historic friendship in his address. He emphasized the need to further enhance people-to-people relationships, drawing lessons from China's successful implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

"Pakistan and China are time-tested friends, and our friendship has stood the test of time. We must continue to strengthen our bonds by increasing cultural, trade, and business exchanges. The CPEC is a game-changer for Pakistan's economy, and with enduring cooperation, we will see significant development across various sectors," stated Mr. Arshad Ayub Khan.

He also praised the

efforts of the Pakistan China Friendship Association KP and encouraged more initiatives that foster cultural understanding and economic collaboration. He specifically urged for the learning of the Chinese language and deeper engagement with Chinese experts to benefit from their experience and expertise.

Kot AJK in the court.

Imaan Mazari counsel for poet Ahmad Farhad came on the rostrum during the hearing of the case and took the plea one more went missing and his FIR was registered after four days.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani inquired what is your information. Imaan Mazari said he was doing social media posts with reference to Kashmir. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani remarked IG Islamabad should see this matter.

The court remarked now I am not saying anything. Only I have informed you to see it.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani remarked no one has any enmity with agencies. We only say that they should work as per law.