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Ruling alliance suffers major blow PA speaker suspends 27 MPAs in light of SC's decision on reserved seats

Of 27 suspended MPAs, 23 belong to ruling PML-N, two to PPP and one each to IPP and PML-Q; Speaker suspends members of 24 woman, 3 minority lawmakers.

LAHORE (INP): Following the Supreme Court's ruling on reserved seats after the nullification of the Peshawar High Court's verdict, the ruling alliance faced a major blow as their 27 lawmakers in the Punjab Assembly faced suspension on Friday.

After reading out the top court's verdict in the provincial legislative assembly, Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan suspended the memberships of 27 lawmakers who had been allocated reserved seats for women and minorities.

Twenty-three out of 27 lawmakers belonged to the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) whose number of seats in the House has been re-

duced to 203.

Subsequently, two lawmakers of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) faced suspension, as well as one each from the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q).

The speaker suspended memberships on 24 reserved seats for women and the other three for minorities.

The suspended members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) representing minorities in the Punjab Assembly include Tariq Masih Gul, Waseem Anjum and Basro Jee.

The suspended women MPAs include Maqsood Bibi, Robina Nazeer, Salma Zahid, Kanwal Noman, Zeba

Ghafoor, Saeeda Samreen Taj, Sheher Bano, Amna Perveen, Syed Sumera Ahmed, Uzma Butt, Afshan Hussain, Shagufta Faisal, Nasreen Riaz, Sajida Naveed, Farzana Abbas, Maria Talal, Tasheen Fawad, Abida Bashir, Saadia Muzaffar, Faiza Momina, Amira Khan, Samiya Ata, Rahat Afza and Rukhsar Shafiq.

Earlier this week, the apex court suspended the PHC's verdict on the reserved seat while accepting the Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) plea against the high court's ruling.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had rejected the party's plea depriving it of reserved seats.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level review meeting regarding Ease of Doing Business.

CPEC the crown jewel in China, Pakistan friendship, says Ahsan Iqbal

BEIJING (APP): Calling the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) an exemplar of friendship between the two countries, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal said there has always been "spring" in the relations between Pakistan and China which are always moving on an upward trajectory.

CPEC, which was launched in 2013 and is a flagship project under the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, has "benefited Pakistan's economy immensely", he said in Beijing.

Pakistan looks forward to further cooperating with China to seek shared economic growth as CPEC has entered into its second phase, he added.

"The garden of friendship between Pakistan and China in every season has blossomed new and colorful flowers of cooperation and understanding between the people of Pakistan and China," the minister said.

Iqbal lauded CPEC for transforming the development landscape of, creating

jobs for and building connectivity for his country, China Daily reported.

"CPEC has helped Pakistan transform its energy and infrastructure sectors and connect several parts of the country so the fruits of development can be shared across various regions of Pakistan," Iqbal said.

"It also helped create over two million jobs and helps Pakistan's workers master new technology and get trained in projects," he added.

Iqbal slammed the so-called debt trap narrative as far from reality and expressed appreciation for China's financial support which he said has been "very attractive financing for Pakistan".

Iqbal said China outlined five corridors under CPEC last year, namely growth, livelihood, openness, inclusivity and innovation, which were well aligned with 5-E's framework, namely Export, Energy, Equity, E-Pakistan and Environment, envisioned by the government of Pakistan.

IMF demands pension tax on retired govt. employees

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reportedly presented new demands to Pakistan ahead of crucial negotiations set to begin today.

Among these demands is the taxation of pensions for retired government employees.

According to media reports, the IMF seeks additional revenue generation of 0.5% of Pakistan's Gross National Product (GDP), translating to approximately Rs. 600 billion. This revenue is expected to come primarily from taxes levied on salaried individuals and businesses.

The IMF is emphasizing the need for Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to focus on increasing tax collection. Furthermore, the IMF reportedly advocates for the elimination of tax exemptions currently enjoyed by several pension schemes.

The upcoming negotiations mark the 24th IMF program for Pakistan and are touted as the most challenging to date.

PM tasks BOI to bring further EoDB for more investment, businesses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday tasked the Board of Investment with the target to bring more ease for attracting investment and pave way for more businesses in the country.

The prime minister, who chaired a high-level review meeting on Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) for investment and business activities, said the minimum impediments were a must to attract investment.

He told the meeting that during his previous tenure, he had taken priority measures to promote investment and business and that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had also played a supportive role in achieving the goals of economic revival.

He said the promotion of foreign investment and business activities in the country manifested the efforts by the government team for which they deserved an applause.

The prime minister said that the visits of business delegations from friendly countries and surge

in stock market reflected the trust of local and foreign investors in the government policies.

He instructed the BOI to formulate a mechanism on the pattern of one window operation in coordination with all the ministries and provincial governments.

He also called for the devising a strategy, in collaboration with the business community and provincial governments, to make the new investors and businessmen face minimum hurdles in their ventures.

He also instructed for engaging experts of international repute for the purpose.

Federal ministers Jam Kamal Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Abdul Aleem Khan, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, parliamentarians and relevant senior officers attended the meeting via video link.



QUETTA: Former Chairman Senate, MPA Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, Senator Manzoor Khan Kakar, Provincial Minister Ziaullah Langgo and former Speaker Balochistan Assembly Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali meeting with Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

We can easily put our universities on path of self-sufficiency by adopting modern means: Governor

INDEPENDENT REPORT
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has believed that we can easily put our universities on path of self-sufficiency by adopting modern means and mechanism instead of traditional procedures to settle their financial and administrative matters.

The Governor stressed the need to prepare a comprehensive policy to save all the public sector universities from the financial crisis in future and ensure timely payment of the salaries to their teachers and employees.

In this regard, the incumbent federal and provincial governments would also be taken into conference.

These views were expressed by the Governor while speaking to the Provincial Minister for Education, Ms Rahila Hameed

Khan Durrani, Vice Chancellors of different public sector universities of the province including Professor Dr Dost Muhammad Baloch, Dr Abdul Malik Tareen and Dr Jan Muhammad Baloch who called on him separately here on Friday.

During the course of meetings, the Governor said that it is our personal interest and conscious effort to promote healthy academic environment in all higher educational institutions of the province.

He made it clear that concrete steps would be taken for promotion of quality education in the province.

He said that the issues being confronted by the universities can easily be overcome with recommendations of concerned experts and making all responsible persons efficient at the universities level.



QUETTA: Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langgo meeting with Speaker Balochistan Assembly Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai

Pakistan's lunar satellite sends initial images from space

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's lunar satellite, iCUBE Qamar has sent the initial images from orbit after successfully completing three rounds of the moon.

The images were released by Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) on Friday.

The satellite, iCube Qamar has completed three lunar orbits after being launched aboard China's Chang'e-6 space-

craft from Hainan, China on May 03.

According to the Pakistan Institute of Space Technology (IST), Pakistan's lunar CubeSat iCUBE-Q was successfully deployed in orbit at 1314 hours on May 08 from Chang'E-6.

IST which is a leading high-end university of Pakistan had the distinct honor of launching a Cube Satellite iCUBE-Qamar (iCUBE-Q) in Lunar orbit onboard China's Chang'e-6 Mission.

President summons NA session on 13th

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned the session of the National Assembly on Monday (May 13) at 04:00 pm.

The president summoned the session of National Assembly in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 54(1) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

PM condoles over demise of UAE's Sheikh Hazza bin Sultan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed grief over the demise of Sheikh Hazza bin Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the royal family of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The prime minister offered condolences to the UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and members of the royal family.

He prayed to Allah Almighty to bless the departed soul with eternal peace in paradise.

According to the UAE media, late Sheikh Hazza bin Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan was the son of Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who had died in 2019.

The body of the deceased was laid to rest at the Al Bateen cemetery in Abu Dhabi.

Cabinet accords approval to remove chairman federal education board

ISLAMABAD (Online): Federal cabinet has accorded approval to remove Qaisar Alam, chairman Federal Education Board from his post.

Syed Junaid Ikhlag has been appointed as acting chairman federal education board. Cabinet has given approval in this regard.

Syed Junair Ikhlag has been given additional charge. Notification in this regard has been issued.



BEIJING: Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal participated in a seminar organized by Belt and Road Center of National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

Tarar for measures at global level to counter misuse of social media, spread of fake news

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar said on Friday that there was a need for measures at the global level to counter the misuse of social media and the spread of fake news.

"The Government of Pakistan recognizes the importance of freedom of the

press and freedom of expression, and it is determined to protect the rights of journalists", he said while talking to a delegation of Bangladeshi journalists visiting Pakistan who met him here.

In the meeting, various important issues were discussed.

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Provincial Minister for Finance maintains: Mining sector can prove to be game changer if attention paid with good intention

INDEPENDENT REPORT
QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Finance, Mir Shaoib Nausherwani has categorically stated that Balochistan is blessed with natural resources as there exist vast reservoirs of different minerals.

He regretfully pointed out that unfortunately, no proper attention was given on the mining sector in the past. If attention was paid on the mining sector in Balochistan with good intention, then it can prove to be game changer in time to come, maintained the Provincial Minister for Finance while speaking to a delegation of mine owners here on Friday.

The mine owners apprised the Minister Finance about their issues.

Secretary Mines and Mineral Development,

Saidal Khan Luni and Director General Mines, Abdullah Khan were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Shaoib Nausherwani said that the provincial government is determined to resolve the issues being faced by masses under leadership of Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti.

He assured that the issues of people would be resolved at their doorstep.

He said that reforms would be brought about in the mining sector by mobilizing all available resources. The mining sector would be put on modern lines, adding he assured.

Governor condemns killing of labourers in Gwadar

INDEPENDENT REPORT
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has strongly condemned the incident of killing of labourers in Gwadar the other day.

In a condemnation statement issued here on Friday, the Governor said that there's an important role of labourers in development of any civilized society. The killing of a person means killing of a bread earner of a family, he added.

The Governor directed the law enforcement agencies to arrest the elements involved in the incident and taken them to task. He expressed condolence and solidarity with the bereaved families of martyred labourers.



KALAT: Deputy Commissioner Kalat Flight Lt. (Retd) Bilal Shabbir briefed Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court Mr. Justice Hashim Khan Kakar about proposed place for judicial complex.

Displeased with law & order situation: Govt endeavouring to prevent Gwadar and Kech like incidents in future: Zia

INDEPENDENT REPORT
QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langove has expressed displeasure over the law and order situation in the province.

He said that the recent incidents of lawlessness and loss of human lives in them are intolerable.

In view of the situation, the Provincial Minister directed the Additional Chief Secretary Home to take steps for improving law

and order in the provin priority.

The Minister said that it is responsibility of the government to protect life and property of the people.

He asserted that the district administration, DIG of Police and DPOs should consider themselves to be under suspension if the situation of law and order was deteriorated in their areas. He warned that the officers committing negligence in their duties would not be spared at all.

PM paying attention on development of Balochistan: Syedal

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate Syedal Khan Nasir on Friday said that the Prime Minister was paying special attention on development of Balochistan. He said that due to the positive policies of the government, investors had restored confidence in Pakistan and foreign investors were ready to invest in the country.

He expressed these views while talking to various delegations which called on him at his residence in Quetta. The Deputy Chairman Senate said that the federal and provincial governments would work together to solve the problems of the

people and youth would get employment from timely completion of mega projects which would be eliminated backwardness from respective areas of Balochistan.

Syed Khan Nasir said that Gwadar Port was a game changer for the development of Balochistan saying that Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Prime Minister Mian Shabbaz Sharif had issued directives to complete Gwadar Port and other major projects in the province as soon as possible so that the people of the province could benefit from these big mega projects.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner, Saad Bin Asad listening the problems and demands of Zamindar Action Committee during their protest, outside Balochistan Assembly in Quetta.

By wide margin UN General Assembly votes to back Palestinian bid for membership; Pakistan backs

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The United Nations General Assembly Friday voted, by an overwhelming majority, to grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and called on the Security Council to favourably reconsider its request to become a full member of the UN.

The renewed push for full Palestinian membership in the UN comes as Israeli aggression in Gaza has put the more than 75-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict at center stage. At numerous Council and Assembly meetings, the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians in Gaza and the killing of more than 35,000 people in the enclave, have generated worldwide outrage over Israeli atrocities.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, Ms Rubina Khalid, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan attends flower exhibition at FG Public School

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan, attended a flower exhibition at FG Public School on Madrasah Road, Quetta, as a chief guest. This event was organized by the school's children with support from the school administration.

of events in educational institutions help foster creativity among students and promote environmental awareness in the younger generation. He also added that the creativity and talent demonstrated by the children would guide Pakistan towards development and prosperity.

Advertisement for 'TENDER NOTICE' with details on procurement rules, eligibility, and contact information for the Conservator of Forest Range, Quetta.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Volleyball Federation, Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob and others unveiling the trophy of the Central Asian Volleyball League at local hotel.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Mohammed Ishaq Dar chairing the meeting of Cabinet Committee on Privatisation.

Atta Tarar eulogizes hockey team players as 'national heroes'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday wished best of luck to the final of Azlan Shah Hockey Cup 2024, eulogizing them as "heroes of the whole nation".

ranking teams such as New Zealand and Korea in the tournament. "You have outshined them and performed excellently. You are our heroes and you will win the final match InshAllah," he added.

Ireland clinch maiden victory against Pakistan in T20I

Hosts stun Green Shirts by five wickets in first T20I of three-match series

DUBLIN: Ireland clinched their maiden T20I victory against Pakistan as they beat the Green Shirts in the opener of the three-match series at the Clontarf Cricket Club, Dublin, on Friday.

Shah picked one wicket off 29 balls, including four boundaries and three sixes. Meanwhile, Babar crossed fifty for the 38th time in T20Is. He was caught by Mark Adair off the bowling of Craig Young, scoring 57 runs from 43 deliveries.

Advertisement for 'TENDER NOTICE' regarding procurement of nursery plants in Maslakh Range, Quetta.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Youth's Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan on Friday announced that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will host the National Hockey Team for their excellent performance in the Azlan Shah Hockey Tournament on their return back to the country.

Advertisement for 'CORRIGENDUM' regarding a notice inviting tenders for drilling and development of local bore for agriculture purpose.

Advertisement for 'TENDER NOTICE' regarding procurement of flood protection scheme in Basti Durkani, Raheem Shah Grave, Yardi of Kandhar Area, District Barkhan.

Advertisement for 'TENDER NOTICE' regarding procurement of forest range management in Quetta.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will host the National Hockey Team for their excellent performance in the Azlan Shah Hockey Tournament on their return back to the country. Congratulating the hockey team on the video link for succeeding in the final of the Azlan Shah Cup after 13 years, he said that Pakistan's qualification for the final of a major event after a long time was a demonstration of the selection on merit due to the devotion of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif with sports.

Advertisement for 'TENDER NOTICE' regarding procurement of flood protection scheme in Basti Durkani, Raheem Shah Grave, Yardi of Kandhar Area, District Barkhan.

Advertisement for 'TENDER NOTICE' regarding procurement of flood protection scheme in Basti Durkani, Raheem Shah Grave, Yardi of Kandhar Area, District Barkhan.

TTP should be handled through coordination with Afghan Govt: Gen Janjua

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former National Security Advisor, Lieutenant General @ Nasir Khan Janjua on Friday suggested that the way forward to deal with the challenge of cross-border terrorism, especially the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), was to proceed through the Afghan government. He was speaking at a seminar organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here.

He also underscored that for a better future, and ensuring a better partnership in the development of the region, the country needed to look at Afghanistan beyond the TTP factor, a news release said.

He also emphasized the need to see the cross-border terrorism threat in a larger canvas, adding that "today's challenges are direct outcomes of the conflicting ideologies of different countries and their maneuverings with the insurgent groups."

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Asif Ali Khan Durrani, Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan said that peace

in Afghanistan seemed a tall order for now, therefore we have to live with the neighboring country and manage our affairs with Afghanistan accordingly.

Ambassador Durrani also noted that "earlier, it was hoped that with the arrival of the Taliban, the security situation on the Pak-Afghan border would improve but unfortunately the TTP attacked emanating from Afghanistan had increased by 60 percent in the last two years.

Regarding Indian involvement in fomenting terrorism, he stated, "I have no qualms in saying that Indians are paying the TTP through the Afghan proxies, and it is not something new as Indians have been propping up the TTP since the Karzai government." He emphasized that the state should not negotiate with non-state actors.

Sharing his thoughts on the occasion, Dr Kaleem Imam, former IGP and counterterrorism expert, said that besides the TTP, several other militant organizations were actively involved in spreading insur-

gencies such as BLA, and BLF. He suggested that for countering each of these groups different strategies were required as one model could not apply to all, given the complex nature of militant networks and their ideologies. Zahid Hussain, renowned author and journalist said that what was happening after the return of the Taliban was not something surprising as it had been predicted well in time, but we were not prepared for it. He underlined that "it is not possible for the TTP to stay in Afghanistan without the support of the Afghan Taliban" and regretted that an incoherent approach had led to the failure of the state in countering the existential threat of terrorism.

He also impressed upon the need for clarity in policies towards TTP since "fighting and negotiation could not go side by side."

Agreeing with Hussain, Gharida Farooqi, a senior journalist and anchor argued that it was impossible to develop a consensus out of "both confusion and 'clarity'."



ISLAMABAD: Secretary of BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, provides a briefing to Chairperson BISP, Ms. Rubina Khalid, on BISP's core and newly launched initiatives at BISP Headquarters on May 10, 2024. Additional Secretary BISP, Dr. Muhammad Tahir Noor, and all Director Generals of BISP are also present in the meeting.

Rubina vows commitment to transparent governance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ms. Rubina Khalid, a prominent figure known for her advocacy in social welfare and community development, has officially taken the helm as the Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). In a heartfelt address to BISP employees, she underscored the significance of the program's namesake, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and pledged to uphold her legacy as a guiding light for the organization.

"Let people learn how to earn," declared Ms. Khalid in her inaugural address, encapsulating her vision for the empowerment of marginalized communities through education and economic opportunities.

She emphasized the

sacred nature of the Benazir Income Support Programme and its role in honoring the memory of Benazir Bhutto, whose mission continues to inspire their work.

Speaking passionately to the gathered staff, Ms. Khalid emphasized, "The name of Benazir Income Support Programme is sacred to me as it is named after our beloved Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, whose mission is our work."

She further urged employees to maintain the highest standards of integrity and transparency in serving the program's beneficiaries, who are predominantly orphans and widows. "We have a solemn duty to ensure that every penny reaches those who

need it most," she added.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of the BISP team, Ms. Khalid expressed her expectations for unwavering dedication and honesty. "I expect that we will work together with complete honesty as this is the money of poor people. We have to ensure transparency in payment disbursement, and I need your full support in this regard," she affirmed.

Prior to Ms. Rubina Khalid's address, Dr. Amjad Saqib, the former Chairperson of BISP, extended a warm welcome to her, praising her longstanding commitment to the welfare of the people. Dr. Saqib's endorsement further solidifies Ms. Khalid's reputation as a dedicated advocate for social justice.

Unified efforts to combat dengue in twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioners of Islamabad and Rawalpindi on Friday chaired a high-level meeting here at DC Office which was aimed at synchronizing strategies for dengue prevention in the twin cities. According to the Spokesman of ICT Administration, the administrations of Islamabad and Rawalpindi have joined hands, in a bid to curb the spread of dengue fever.

The meeting was attended by administrative officers, district health officers, and the CEO of DHHA Rawalpindi. Additionally, representatives from CDA, MCI, and relevant departments also participated in the meeting.

The primary focus of the discussions was on col-

laborative action plans, with particular attention to border areas shared by the two districts. Joint operations will be conducted to target these regions, aiming to eliminate dengue larvae and halt the transmission of the disease. The decision to coordinate efforts reflects a proactive approach by the authorities to address the pressing issue of dengue fever. By pooling resources and expertise, Islamabad and Rawalpindi aim to bolster their defenses against the disease, safeguarding the health and well-being of residents across both cities.

These unified efforts against dengue are a significant step toward the ongoing battle to protect communities from vector-borne diseases.

Houbara Bustard SC fixes for hearing petitions filed against hunting

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has fixed for hearing petitions filed against the hunting of Houbara Bustard.

A bench has been constituted to hear the petitions against the hunting of Houbara Bustard.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa will hear the petitions, on May 17.

Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan are members of the bench.

It is pertinent to mention here that SC has already conducted hearing with reference to this case. It had imposed ban on the hunting of Houbara bustard.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visiting the under construction Model Prison.

Mohsin Naqvi directs to complete construction work of Model Jail

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited the model jail under construction in Sector H of Islamabad and ordered to complete the construction work within six months.

During an inspection of under-construction jail, the minister observed that the project of construction of jail in Islamabad has been stalled for 13 year but now it will be completed in 6 months.

Naqvi tasked the officials concerned to complete the first phase of the prison construction in 6 months directing Chief Commissioner Islamabad and IG Islamabad Police to regu-

larly review progress on construction activities.

Keeping the project on hold for 7 year is clearly incompetence, Mohsin Naqvi observed, adding that the construction work in jail should continue day and night in the timeline.

The process of appointment of necessary staff should also be started immediately, he ordered adding that the provision of resources for the completion of the project will be ensured.

The minister gave instructions to the concerned authorities regarding the completion of the project under construction.

Chief Commissioner

Islamabad Mohammad Ali Randhawa briefed the minister about the project.

He said that the project to build a jail in Islamabad started in 2011 but even after many years, this project could not be completed.

He said that the jail will have a capacity of 2,000 prisoners however the capacity to hold two thousand more prisoners will be increased.

Federal Interior Secretary Khurram Agha, Chief Commissioner Islamabad Mohammad Ali Randhawa, IG Police Islamabad Contractors, Consultants and concerned officials were also present on the occasion.

FIA foils mobile phone smuggling attempt at Islamabad Airport

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) immigration team at Islamabad International Airport successfully thwarted a mobile phone smuggling attempt on Friday, seizing a large cache of expensive mobile phones and other electronic devices.

According to FIA spokesperson, two passengers, identified as Babar Ayub and Muhammad Salman, arrived at the airport from Dubai and were intercepted by the agency

officials due to suspicious behavior.

Upon inspection, the team recovered 50 high-end mobile phones, 100 data cables, and three Apple MacBooks from their possession, a private news channel reported.

The smuggled mobile phones, worth millions of rupees, were cleverly concealed in packets of dates.

The FIA officials handed over the suspects to customs authorities for further investigation.

AIOU inks MoU with PDC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Premium Diagnostic Center, Islamabad (PDC) to provide lab facilities to employees at discounted rates.

Vice Chancellor, of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood presided over the ceremony. Dr. Nasir said that the welfare and good health of our employees and their families is our priority, healthy person always performs his duties with full zest.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba shouting slogans during Ghaza March in the Federal Capital.

Meezan Bank, Roche Pakistan join forces to combat breast cancer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Meezan Bank, Pakistan's first and largest Islamic Bank, has joined hands with Roche Pakistan, one of the world's leading biotech companies, in an initiative aimed at alleviating the financial burden of breast cancer treatment for patients across Pakistan.

Breast cancer remains a critical health challenge in Pakistan, claiming numerous lives and impacting

countless families each year, said a news release.

Recognizing the urgency of addressing this pressing issue, Meezan Bank has pledged its unwavering support to ease the financial strain associated with diagnosis, medication, and therapy for affected individuals and their families. The primary aim of this sponsorship is to offer the finest medical services to breast cancer patients.

Islamabad Police arrest 6 POs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Police arrested six proclaimed offenders (POs) and absconders involved in heinous crimes, a police spokesperson said on Friday.

According to the spokesperson, on the special directives of Inspector General of Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, an operation was underway in Islamabad to arrest absconders and target offenders involved in heinous and property crimes.

CDA chairman inspects ongoing development projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa visited ongoing development projects on Friday, focusing on completing maintenance work, landscaping, and ensuring cost-effective implementation.

The projects visited included Iran Avenue, Margalla Avenue, Margalla Avenue Extension from GT Road to M-1, and 10th Avenue, said a news release.

During his inspection of Iran Avenue, Muhammad Ali examined the median strips and surrounding landscaping. He instructed that the light poles installed along the Avenue should be aesthetically enhanced.

An official briefed the

Chairman of the Iran Avenue project, highlighting its 5.8-kilometer length with dual carriageways on both sides. Initially budgeted at Rs 3.9 billion, the project is now expected to be completed within Rs 3.5 billion. The chairman CDA also assessed Margalla Avenue, where maintenance work is nearing completion.

The official informed the chairman CDA that Margalla Avenue spans 10.5 kilometers with dual carriageways and is expected to be completed within a budget of Rs 2.6 billion. Muhammad Ali then visited Margalla Avenue Extension from GT Road to M-1, where a 3.5-kilometer road with dual carriageways is currently under construction.

Certificates distribution ceremony of wireless training program held

ISLAMABAD: According to details, following the special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, a course on the maintenance of basic wireless communication equipment was organized in collaboration with the Interna-

tionally preparedness of the Islamabad Police wireless staff for maintaining and repairing fundamental wireless communication equipment.

In this regard, a certificate distribution ceremony of wireless training program was held at Police Lines Headquarters Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Senior adviser Wafaqi Mohtasib providing prompt relief to citizens on complaints against agencies.

Senior adviser says: Wafaqi Mohtasib providing prompt relief to citizens on complaints against agencies

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) is providing expeditious and free-of-cost relief to citizens on their grievances against the federal government agencies, Senior Adviser Abdul Moiz Bukhari has said.

The official expressed these views at a briefing to the interns of Associated Press of Pakistan's youth media training programme during their visit to the Ombudsman Secretariat.

Bukhari said Wafaqi Mohtasib was contributing to good governance in public departments through its verdicts ensuring the principles of "fairness, transparency and integrity".

In 2023, he said, action was taken on a record 194,099 complaints registered against government departments, out of which 193,028 were addressed.

He said the Mohtasib received 49,190 online and 22,321 complaints through mobile application, witnessing a 47 and 21 percent increase compared to 2022, respectively. An action was taken on a record number of 202,367 complaints received from overseas Pakistanis, he added.

Besides use of technology, he said, new regional offices, Khuli katchehris (open courts), unconventional modes of mediation and visits of inspection teams proved helpful in resolution of complaints.

The senior adviser said a review appeal could be lodged by any party against the decision of Wafaqi Mohtasib, which is settled within 60 days. If unsatisfied with decision, an appeal can be made to the President of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Commuters drive at Islamabad Highway during heavy rain in morning hours in the Federal Capital.

Plastic pandemic could prolong Pakistan's climate battle, experts warn

ISLAMABAD (APP): 'As Pakistan endeavors to combat climate change; the looming specter of the plastic pandemic emerges as a formidable obstacle. From polluted waterways to compromised ecosystems, plastic pollution threatens to prolong the nation's fight against environmental challenges.

The climate and health experts have warned to address this pressing issue on urgent basis to protect Pakistan's sustainability efforts.

"Despite strides in environmental policy and activism, the pervasive presence of plastic pollution threatens to prolong the nation's fight against climate instability. From clogged waterways to compromised ecosystems, the detrimental effects of plastic cast a shadow over Pakistan's sustainability aspirations, underscoring

the urgency of concerted action" warned a renowned environmentalist Dr Ejaz Ahmed, a former Director at WWF-Pakistan.

Dr. Ejaz Ahmed also advocated the potential of recycling initiatives and scientific advancements in transforming plastic waste into a valuable resource for the country's benefits.

From co-processing fuel in cement production to construction materials, innovative solutions promise to mitigate the plastic menace while reducing carbon emissions, he remarked.

Highlighting the adverse effects of plastic in everyday human life and health, Dr. Ejaz said the repercussions of plastic pervasiveness are manifold, from endangering aquatic life to clogging drainage systems and health woes. Despite concerted efforts to raise awareness and enforce regulations; the insidious

spread of plastic persists, permeating daily life from household items to food packaging, he lamented.

Plastic pollution, omnipresent and insidious, is wreaking havoc and from production to disposal, its detrimental effects reverberate across ecosystems, posing a daunting challenge to Pakistan's sustainability efforts, he expressed dismay.

In Pakistan, where the specter of climate change looms large, the battle against plastic pollution has assumed paramount importance. With over 300 million tons of plastic churned out globally each year, and a staggering half of it comprising single-use plastics, the urgency to stem this tide has never been more pressing.

While countries like Bangladesh, France, and Rwanda have taken decisive steps to curb plastic proliferation, Pakistan stands

at a pivotal juncture, grappling with the highest percentage of mismanaged plastic in South Asia. The issuance of a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) banning plastic bags in key cities like Islamabad, Lahore, and Hunza marks a significant stride, albeit amidst a lack of comprehensive policy frameworks at the federal and provincial levels.

Shafee Muhammad Marwat, a Director at the Capital's civic body, that periodically launches campaigns against pollution, highlighted the dangers of plastic, citing its harm to both human and aquatic life, as well as its detrimental effects on infrastructure. Despite previous efforts to discourage its use through campaigns and fines, plastic remains pervasive, even being used for food and waste disposal, he admitted.

Climate and Health

experts echoed unanimous concerns on the dire health consequences of plastic proliferation, citing the emergence of lung diseases, cancers, and dermatological ailments as harbingers of a looming crisis.

Endorsing Marwat and DR Ejaz's concerns, Dr. Shazia Aslam, a well-known Lahore-based dermatologist, underscores the health risks posed by plastic, including the release of toxic chemicals when heated, leading to lung diseases and cancers.

Highlighting the deleterious effects of plastic on human health, Dr. Shazia Aslam stresses the urgent need to transition to biodegradable alternatives.

As Pakistan navigates the treacherous waters of climate change, the battle against plastic pollution emerges as a defining frontier in its quest for environmental sustainability.



ISLAMABAD: Children are enjoying swings at Japanese Park during pleasant weather after the rain in the Federal Capital.

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Independent

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Enrolment drive

In a promising albeit familiar declaration, the prime minister has announced a four-year "education emergency" to eradicate the blight of illiteracy and bring millions of out-of-school children into the classroom fold. While many governments have come and gone and such emergencies have been declared, obstacles to access, quality and equity in education persist, underscoring the need for a renewed commitment. The PM's stated resolve to personally oversee this initiative and to collaborate across provincial and political lines enhances hope but also raises the stakes for tangible outcomes.

Pakistan's education crisis is both deep-rooted and widespread. The statistics are sobering: the country grapples with a literacy rate of only 62pc and educational spending at a mere 1.7pc of its GDP. There are an estimated 26m children out of school and 70pc of 10-year-olds are unable to comprehend basic texts. Add to this the fact that a significant proportion of schools lack basic facilities such as potable water and toilets.

The disparity in educational access between urban and rural areas, and between boys and girls, further complicates matters. The authorities must prepare a solid plan of action if they truly aim to tackle this beast. First, increasing the allocation of GDP to education by the provinces and the centre is non-negotiable. This increase must be used judiciously to improve school infrastructure and ensure all children have access to basic educational facilities. Furthermore, teacher recruitment, training, and retention strategies must be overhauled to address the gap of 200,000 vacant teaching positions nationwide, as highlighted by Malala Yousafzai.

Additionally, the authorities should implement targeted interventions to bring out-of-school children, especially girls, into the educational system. Initiatives like the school meal programmes, as suggested by the World Food Programme, can be effective in increasing school attendance, while addressing nutritional deficiencies that affect learning.

The curriculum needs to be revamped to focus on foundational literacy and numeracy. Integrating technology can help bridge the gap between different regions and provide remote learning opportunities. Moreover, collaborative efforts with international partners and NGOs should be harnessed to bring best practices and funding to the fore. International organisations are poised to support, but they require a dispensation that is transparent and committed in its approach. Lastly, the commitment to establish the 'Pakistan Skill Company' and the 'Pakistan Skill Development Fund' is a step in the right direction. It acknowledges the broader spectrum of education beyond primary schooling, which is crucial for economic independence and growth. With a strategic, well-funded, and inclusive approach, it is possible to transform the educational landscape of Pakistan. It is hoped that the education authorities deliver an actionable plan that will stand the test of time and political change. For once, let this not be a missed opportunity.

Faisal Bari

On Wednesday, the prime minister announced an education emergency at a conference in Islamabad. Though post-18th Amendment, education has been a provincial subject, the prime minister said that the emergency was for the country and he would work with all provinces and chief ministers to ensure cooperation, compliance and follow-up. Representatives from the provinces were present at the conference.

About 26.2 million children between five and 16 years are out of school in the country. For those who are in school, most are provided with a poor quality of education. Access to quality education depends, almost exclusively, on parental income levels: if you have the income, you can get your child a decent quality of education. Otherwise, your child is either not in school, or enrolled in a government or low-fee private school. Most

such schools provide poor quality education.

Article 25-A, which says that "free and compulsory" education would be provided to all five- to 16-year-olds in the country, was added to the basic rights section of our Constitution in 2010. Fourteen years later, we are declaring an emergency to do what we had promised our children in the Constitution as a basic right! In an earlier speech, the prime minister had called this criminal negligence. It is surely more than that.

The meaning of 'emergency', according to one dictionary, is "a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action". The situation is definitely serious and dangerous as far as the state of education in the country is concerned. But it is not unexpected: it has been the result of decades of a deliberate and purposeful neglect of education.

Even today, when international bodies recommend a minimum ex-

penditure of four per cent of GDP on education, our government spends 1.7pc or so. The situation is also not unexpected, given that educationists, researchers, academics, civil society representatives, teachers, parents and children who have been talking of this neglect for years have not been heard. Every education policy of the past has also had aspirations to universalise education. We started off in the right direction with the first education conference held in 1947, but we have yet to universalise education. The current situation is the result of the choices that we, as a society, have made and are still making.

Given this, the bit on emergencies 'requiring immediate action' is the part that is yet to happen. While announcing the emergency, there was nothing about what steps would be taken to address the situation, what policy changes would take place, and when the state would invest more in education and how.

When will all this start?

How will it be implemented? Who will monitor the implementation and ensure we move towards the goal of 'access to quality education for all children', and how do we ensure all this is not just rhetoric and that actual action will indeed follow?

The prime minister did say he will be monitoring the situation himself. It is good to have that level of commitment, but given the demands on a prime minister's time, this might not work. It was also mentioned that there will be a 'task force' to look at issues of implementation. The task force, its mandate and power, its modus operandi, have not been announced as yet. Let us see when the follow-up happens.

Clearly, a lot of urgent and comprehensive work is needed if we are going to live up to our promises of providing access to quality education to all our children. If it takes the cloak of an emergency to do it, so be it. But the proof will be in the actions that

start now, and in outcomes that are achieved as a result. Otherwise, it is all rhetoric and it will be another opportunity wasted.

There might not be one programme that all the governments follow. Given the varied conditions and circumstances across the provinces and the Islamabad Capital Territory, if governments have their own priorities in line with local conditions, this is not an issue. In fact, it is better this way, as local programming will create local buy-in as well. But there has to be a clear declaration of priorities by all governments and, subsequently, the action plans they will follow.

Pakistan has some 100,000 schools in the public sector and more than 250,000 in total. Similarly, we have about 1m teachers in the public sector, and more than 2m teachers overall working in the education sector. We are still short of schools as well as teachers. So, we are talking of a very large system here. Reform of a large system or change in a large sys-

tem will require large and deep interventions. Small initiatives here and there, as governments have been taking in education for quite some time, are not going to be enough to address the issue of 26.2m out-of-school children or the quality of education issues for the millions who are in schools.

We need more schools, teachers and classes; we need to revamp our assessment and examination systems; we need to redo our curricula and books; we need to upgrade teaching skills and content knowledge of teachers; we need better governance structures in the public sector.

All this and more needs to be done at scale and quickly. This will require more resources and it will require a lot of focus on prioritising and coordinating. And it will need high levels of competence as well. By invoking an emergency, the prime minister has said he is putting his weight behind all this. Let us see if this is anything more than rhetoric.

Waiting to practise

Basil Nabi Malik

Once upon a time, the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association wrote a letter to Justice Qazi Faez Isa, before he became chief justice of Pakistan, with regard to the enrolment of advocates to the Supreme Court.

In that letter, the president observed that advocates wait to five years before being interviewed for enrolment at the Supreme Court, despite having obtained a fitness certificate from their respective high court.

These were years in which lawyers were losing briefs and were unable to gain valuable experience at the Supreme Court. They could not appear and improve their skills, nor could they be certain about when to expect any progress on their applications.

To be fair, this problem persisted much before Justice Isa assumed the position of chairman of the enrolment commit-

tee, and, to his credit, he was able to eliminate much of the backlog, if not all, during his tenure. However, this did not mean that the enrolment process was functioning as it should. What it highlighted, instead, was that the system was so reliant on the availability, efficiency and commitment of one person that his or her interest or disinterest could enfranchise or disenfranchise a number of aspiring advocates.

Enrolment in the Supreme Court, amongst other things, entails obtaining a fitness certificate from senior judges of the high court in which you are practising; applying to the Pakistan Bar Council for admission to practise, along with submitting a copy of the fitness certificate obtained; waiting for an interview conducted by a three-member committee of the Pakistan Bar Council chaired by a sitting justice of the Supreme Court with two other members of the Pakistan Bar Council; and, upon passing, filing another application to the Supreme Court reg-

istrar for the signing of the roll.

The process is tedious, and is made more cumbersome by procedural bottlenecks along the way. First, it may take months to be called for a fitness interview. Second, a single three-member committee conducts interviews of hundreds of candidates across the length and breadth of the country, and that too in person, travelling from city to city. Third, and most important, enrolment interviews are subject to the availability of the members, who may have scheduling difficulties, or may not be particularly interested in the first place.

In my case, for example, it took more than two and a half years from the time of applying for enrolment to the Pakistan Bar Council to get an actual interview date, while others who had applied relatively later were called within months. The reason was not favouritism, but rather the fact that the then chair of the committee tried to clear the backlog, and as such, con-

ducted interviews at quick speed. It was commendable, but also placed in poor light some before him who had chosen, for reasons best known to them, not to conduct those interviews, let alone clear the backlog.

This situation epitomises exactly what the underlying problem is. For any process or procedure to pass muster, it must not be held hostage to the demands or schedule of any one member. It must be open, transparent, predictable, and uniform. And for that to happen, a few things, amongst others, will need to change.

Most importantly, the need and necessity of the interview process itself is something that may need to be reconsidered. Rule 108 of the Pakistan Legal Practitioners and Bar Council Rules, 1976, does not mandate an interview process. It is an exercise that may be conducted by the enrolment committee, and not one that must be. And perhaps one of the reasons why the interview process is not mandatory is because of the practical implications of

having to conduct them. In essence, it is an issue not of utility, but of practicality.

If it is still felt that there is a need for the process so as to ensure quality admissions to the bar, then the enrolment committee would be better off pre-assigning and fixing specific dates and periods in which interviews would take place each year, irrespective of who the chairman of the committee is or who its other members are. The interview dates and locations need to be standardised, streamlined, and publicly notified. The members of the committee may change, but those dates and locations should not.

Furthermore, rather than attempting to go from province to province as per a haphazard schedule agreed upon late in the day, the committee should make use of modern technology to lessen the distances involved and save time. In fact, in order to simplify the process, candidates could be given the option to either appear in person in Islamabad, or through a

video link facility offered at the Supreme Court premises in the province in question, or in the event of non-availability, at their respective high court.

The systemic issues in the process, if left unaddressed, will only ensure that future aspirants will not fare any better than those who, as per the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, are forced to wait two to five years to be interviewed and ultimately gain permission to practise at the Supreme Court. It will be a waste of time, energy, and resources, and will deprive the apex court of a reservoir of resources which could serve to better assist it in the matters before it.

As such, unless the process is simplified and streamlined, I fear that, despite the best efforts of some well-intentioned stakeholders from time to time, subsequent batches of aspirants shall be resigned to wait for years on end to grace the Supreme Court with their presence and their skillset.

Crisis of empathy

Jan-e-Alam Khaki

There are many concepts that are shared by all human beings across the globe. One of them is empathy. Through many of my previous articles in these columns, I have focused on universal values, attitudes and beliefs that connect us to the core values of who we are as human beings, highlighting our humanness to promote universal brotherhood and sisterhood. In this, my 50th article for Dawn, I wish to dedicate this piece to a very cherished human concept — empathy.

'Empathy' is part of a family of words that denote a moral concept which goes beyond ordinary ethics, such as sympathy, affection, sharing feelings as if one feels the other person's pain. Empathy is generally described as the ability to take on another's perspective, to understand, and possibly share and respond to their experience.

Empathy can also refer to a sense of harmony between people with the same taste, disposition, or opinion. When a person feels empathy towards a cause or an organisation, they have feelings of approval, loyalty, or support. Sympathy, compassion and care are acts that belong to the family of empathy.

Meanwhile, the polar opposite of empathy are concepts like being unconcerned, remaining indifferent, apathy, or worse still, justifying the suffering of others. When a section of humanity — such as a person, a locality, a community, a nation or a state — falls prey to human or natural disasters, some who do not see them favourably feel that it is 'God's punishment', and that they

deserved it. These kinds of people, when they hear of or observe the suffering of others, are not disturbed.

On the other hand, there are others who, upon hearing or seeing the pain of others, 'feel their suffering. If they can do something, they go forward and support them. If, on the other hand, they cannot do anything, they at least pray for the relief of their pain. Each one of us can have an introspective reflection to see which category we belong to.

Describing the value of empathy, the Aga Khan, a great humanitarian of our times, in an interview called it an "extraordinary ability", describing it as "... the ability to step away from ... [one's] own value system and put themselves in another person's shoes in order to better understand and help that person." Concluding his admiration for the quality of empathy, he said, "I deeply admire it as an irreplaceable talent that is unfortunately all too rare."

In order to develop this attitude, we need to encourage such attitudes in our children, family, in fact, within the larger community.

Today (not that it was less in the past), in our societies, where we tend to see too much brutality and savagery, we need to revisit our humanity and rethink what we have become. It is not a communal or party or tribal quality; it depends on each person. It is an individual trait. Not all members in a family may feel the same way when they see human suffering; some feel more, others less.

Educationist Farid Punjwani thinks there is an "empathy crisis" and argues that "without empathy, the edifice of

ethics and human relations as a whole is inconceivable. And yet, we seem to suffer from a crisis of empathy at the collective level". Interestingly enough, probably all religions, communities and tribes value these feelings, but their adherents vary in actually adopting them in their daily lives. Some people are so conscious of the sufferings of others and feel so strongly about them that they establish institutions that help mitigate these travails to an extent.

Many such inspired people do global hu--manitarian work re--gardless of colour, creed and ideology. They have saved millions across the globe. They live amongst us and deserve support from us.

A great woman served a literally untouchable community in a particular country for over 40 years, leaving her luxurious life in her own country. This is empathy personified. Is it really that impossible for each one of us to adopt this great quality no matter in how small a measure? Let us practise it in our daily life, demonstrate the same to our children, include it in our textbooks, and make it a part of the discourse in places of worship.

It is not just a job of teaching or preaching about human acts of empathy, but everyone becoming conscious about the sufferings of fellow humans. As Sheikh Sa'adi rightly says: 'if you are unconcerned about the sufferings of others, you do not deserve to be called a 'human'. Indeed, being human means feeling the pain of others, and supporting them in whatever way possible. -- Courtesy Dawn

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

It has been 20 years since the iconic peasant movement on the Okara military farms reached its zenith. Having been intimately involved with the struggle of tenant-farmers to secure their historic claims to 17,000 acres of prime agricultural land in the heart of Punjab, I can testify to the conscious effort made by the movement to remind society that peasants remain a political force in the 21st century, whilst also challenging taboos about the military's corporate interests.

Today, farmers are once again on the roads. Under the aegis of the Kissan Ittehad, thousands of landowning farmers are protesting the inexplicable decision to import millions of tonnes of wheat in the face of a bumper harvest at home. The refusal of the government to purchase home-grown produce at a reasonable price has resulted in a glut and major losses for many wheat farmers.

While centred in Punjab, the Kissan Ittehad mobilisation is far more geographically diverse than the peasant movement of two decades ago, which was based largely in Okara and revolved around the fate of tenant-farmers on state-owned land. It is also notable that the Okara protagonists were landless peasants demanding proprietary rights, whereas the present movement features owner-proprietors that are contesting agrarian policies.

This not the first time that relatively prosperous middling farmers have taken to the roads. The Kissan Ittehad has been mobilising for some years now, taking up issues such as electricity costs (tube well use), seed, fertiliser and pesticide prices, as well as the erosion of agricultural

support measures like guaranteed prices for staple crops.

The poorest peasants — landless or owning a modicum of land — are, of course, also impacted by agrarian market logics, but the fact that even more comfortable farming segments are protesting underlines the changing contours of peasant politics.

While the struggles of small and middling farmers is in part due to the profiteering of middlemen — known as also and beoparis — agribusiness firms have come to play a dominant role in Pakistan's agrarian markets. These are companies — domestic and multinational — that try and exercise monopoly control in the supply (including patenting) of inputs and machinery, transportation and storage of produce, and the circulation of commodities.

Agribusiness garners astonishing annual government subsidies in North America and Western Europe. Its takeover of agriculture in countries like Pakistan has been less conspicuous, in part because, as is the case with the manufacturing sector, at least some multinationals subcontract to local firms.

Meanwhile the state has completely reneged on support for peasant farmers, particularly smallholders. Autonomous government entities like the National Fertiliser Corporation and Punjab Seed Corporation have become largely toothless in the face of big private companies, as well as the policy dictates of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank and other donors that sing the praises of the 'free market' by eliminating support prices and facilitating agribusiness.

Of course, state functionaries engage in brazen

pursuit of profit of their own accord when they feel like it. The current wheat import scandal is a classic example, dictated by the (caretaker) federal government despite some opposition by the provinces. Former caretaker prime minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar claimed that the decision was good for consumers, conveniently neglecting mention of the private sector businessmen who were given licences to bring in the import-wed stocks and earn windfall profits.

The rhetoric also confirms that government officials cl--early prioritise ur--b-an 'consumers' over peasant-farmers. A meaningful policy matrix would not be based on such a zero sum game between rural and urban; it is possible to ensure both that peasant-farmers are supported and urban consumers also catered to.

Last but not least, big landowners and rich farmers are not on the roads, in part because they operate like capitalist businessmen. They earn money through a host of diversified assets and then declare it as agricultural income, which is not taxed. That needs to change, as does the lack of regulation of agribusiness and middlemen.

More generally, the state must acknowledge its responsibilities towards small and landless farmers. Land reform, if undertaken in both agricultural and peri-urban areas where agriculture is being swallowed up by real estate mafias, could change the fate of almost 30 million peasants who are now landless, as well as pastoralists who have been almost completely invisibilised as common lands are grabbed by state and capital alike.

Those who decide our fate will never take such steps on their own, so farmers will have to keep marching to force their hand. -- Courtesy Dawn

Maryam launches expanded health service program

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced the extension of the health service program to reach doorsteps daily. At the inaugural ceremony of three mega health projects here on Friday, she expressed gratitude for achieving another milestone in the health sector. She praised the efforts of Health Ministers, Secretary Health, and their teams, attributing the success to their dedication. Reflecting on the past five years, she lamented the reversal of previous positive initiatives. However, she highlighted the joy and satisfaction on Nawaz Sharif's face as a measure of success, emphasizing the importance of delivering healthcare directly to people's homes.

The introduction of the 'Clinic-On-Wheels' program aims to provide essential medical services to the underserved, acknowledging the busy lives of citizens who struggle to prioritize their health. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif also credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for pioneering the 'Clinic-On-Wheels' initiative. The CM said "Shehbaz Sharif, your daughter has introduced a commendable initiative by incorporating 200 'Clinic-On-Wheels' into the program". She said that each unit will be equipped with one doctor, one LHV, and one dispenser, offering medical tests, free medicines, and screening facilities. She said that these mobile clinics will also provide

vaccination, antenatal care, and treatment for malaria, diabetes, and pediatric ailments. Positioned strategically in areas lacking health infrastructure, they'll ensure healthcare reaches people's doorsteps, operating six days a week from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, she informed. She said that this initiative aims to benefit 4 million people, significantly improving access to medical services. The Chief Minister announced the launch of a field hospital project aimed at providing doorstep healthcare, with 2-3 thousand patients receiving free treatment. Personally overseeing the project, she noted zero complaints received so far and praised Secretary Health Ali Jan. Additionally,



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain bidding farewell to pilgrims at Allama Iqbal International Airport.

KP CM outlines measures for province development, prosperity

Independent Report
DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Friday said the government was committed to improving law and order situation and overcoming the energy crisis. Addressing a press conference here, he said that the provincial government was going to present a budget soon and the allocations of funds would be made according to priorities. He said the government's first priority was related to the improvement of the law and order situation in the province. In this regard, he said work had already been started and there were specific districts with poor law and order situation which needed to be improved. He said the health sector was being improved and health card facility had been restored. He said that

efforts were being made to improve the condition of government-run hospitals where people could get facilities under the health card system. Admitting that the people had been subjected to the worst loadshedding, the Chief Minister said our priorities include resolving the energy crisis and in this regard the federal government should pay outstanding dues of the province. Underscoring the importance of transparency in governance the Chief Minister warned of immediate dismissal for those found neglecting their duties or misusing authority. The CM added that there was a zero-tolerance policy against corruption and said culture of nepotism and favoritism would be eliminated. Gandapur highlighted reforms in the education sector, acknowledging existing shortcomings, such as schools with extra teachers or vacant

Opposition decries hurriedly called session of KP Assembly

PESHAWAR (APP): The opposition members in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here Friday criticized government and protested the hurriedly called session of the assembly. The session was chaired by Speaker KP Assembly, Babar Salim Swati. Criticizing government for ignoring the rules and procedures to call the session, they termed the holding of session unconstitutional. They said that it is impossible for members of remote areas to attend the session that was summoned hurriedly and contravening existing rules.

10 outlaws held; arms ammunition recovered

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district police Friday arrested ten outlaws recovering three Kalashnikov, two guns, one rifle and three pistols along with ammunition from their possession, said police spokesman. He said the police were taking indiscriminate actions against criminals following the instructions of District Police Officer (DPO) Nasir Mehmood.



PESHAWAR: Police personnel's showing recovered artifacts to a media here at Police Line.

Inflation in Punjab reduces from 37 to 17 percent: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari on Friday said that inflation in Punjab had reduced from 37 to 17 percent. Addressing a press conference here she said that during two months the price of 20 kg flour bag had reduced by Rs 1,000. She said that it had been a big challenge for the Punjab government to control price hike during the holy month of Ramadan but sincere effort was made to control it through "Ramazan Nigheban Package". She said today she was very happy to tell that the Punjab government succeeded in controlling inflation. Azma Bukhari said that the common man was more concerned about bread not regarding the rate of dollar or GDP. She further said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had taken landmark initiatives for the

welfare of people during a short span of nine weeks. She said that prices of various essential items including "Roti", chicken, onion, tomato, potato and flour had reduced. More efforts would be made to further reduce the price of flour, she said and added that an authority would be set up that would work 24/7 to control inflation. She said, "Laptop scheme will be started again after seven years." Field hospital initiative had been started just to provide better health facilities to the people, she added. Azma said that all possible steps would be taken to empower girls, adding that all departments had to play their due role in this regard. Responding to a question she said the government would fulfill its promise of giving solar panels to those consuming upto 100 units of electricity.



LAHORE: Chief Justice Lahore High Court Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmed Khan taking oath from newly appointed Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor House.

CM announces enhancing UCs funds, starting treatment plants on PPP mode

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that on the demand of union council representatives, he has decided to enhance the funds of union councils so they could serve people of their respective areas. "I'll give you [UCs] more funds and will make you accountable for their judicious spending". Shah said that in the last election of 2018, PPP won three MNA seats and this time we have bagged seven MNAs and 12 MPA seats which is the manifestation of the party workers' hard work and ability to reach the message of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to the people of Karachi. The chief minister said that on the recommendation of party workers, his government would provide the people of Karachi with water

supply, sanitation, and transport facilities, particularly in the under developed areas and directed the Excise & Taxation & Narcotic Control Minister to eliminate the drug mafia from the city. Murad Shah said that a scheme of a sewerage treatment plant would be initiated for Rs135 billion in PPP mode so that treated wastewater could be used for industrial usage. He said this on Friday while speaking at an interactive session of PPP representatives and party workers for budget 2024-25. The meeting was held at Banquet Hall of CM House and attended by Sindh PPP President Nisar Khuhro, General Secretary Sindh Waqar Mahdi, provincial Ministers-Sharjeel Memon, Nasir

Shah, Saeed Ghani, Sardar Shah, Shaheen Sher Ali, Advisor Najmi Alam, Mayor and deputy mayor Karachi, MNAs - Qadir Patel, Hakim baloch, Nabeel Gabol, Dr Akhtiar Baiq, Senators - Nadeem Bhutto, Masroor Ahsan, MPAs, district presidents and general secretaries, representatives of local bodies and party workers. Ms Sadia Majeed, the President PPP Women wing Malir district pointed out that the wastewater of the city and industrial waste was being released untreated in the sea damaging mangroves and marine life badly. At this, the CM assured her that the provincial government was trying to install Treatment plant so that wastewater could be treated and used for agriculture.

Registrar LHC stopped from fixing petition of Suleman for hearing

LAHORE (Online): Registrar Lahore High Court (LHC) has been stopped from fixing petition of Suleman Akram Raja for hearing. Justice Shahid Karim of LHC has remarked my name has also been proposed for tribunal. How can I hear this case? The counsel argued this is not personal matter of any judge. Therefore,

court can hear the case. The court while seeking reply from Election Commission on non appointing judges as tribunal judge adjourned the hearing of the case. Suleman Akram Raja had resorted to LHC in connection with establishment of additional tribunals. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has been made respondent.

IGP honours 5 SIs for passing CSS exams

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has honored five sub-inspectors of the Punjab Police, who have passed the CSS examination. He invited them along with their families to the central police office, awarded them with honorary shields and felicitated their families. SIs Muhammad Bilal Chandia, Awais Arshad, Muhammad Salal.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan in a group photo with the newly Recruited Officer of OMS and DMS through FPSC at CM Secretariat.

KP assembly passes over Rs1360.37bln surplus budget for eight months of FY 2023-24

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly on Friday passed a surplus budget of Rs1,360.37 billion for 11 months of the fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 including the last eight months of the interim government and the last two months of the current elected government. The budget included Rs 1,059.276 billion in ongoing expenses and Rs 301,094 billion in development expenses. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Minister Aftab Alam Afridi presented the budget in the assembly session chaired by Speaker Babar Saleem Swati. He said in his speech that the current financial and economic difficulties have made this budget more difficult because, on the one hand, most of the infrastructure of the province was destroyed due to the disastrous floods of 2022 and on the other hand terrorism. He said successive incidents have also adversely affected the

16 dead, 1,549 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 16 people were killed and 1,549 others injured in 1,434 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 655 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 894 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams. The data analysis showed that 829 drivers, 67 underage drivers, 188 pedestrians and 548 passengers were among the victims of road traffic accidents.

Four killed in Bahawalpur road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four people, including three children were killed in a road accident on the Sutlej River bridge in Bahawalpur on Friday. According to rescue officials, the incident occurred after a speeding trailer hit a motorcycle. As a result, four people, including three children, got injured in the same accident. The rescue officials promptly responded to the accident, and the bodies of the deceased and injured have been transferred to the hospital.

Sardar Saleem Haider takes oath as Governor Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, a political worker of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) from Attock, took oath as the 40th Governor of the province of the Punjab during a solemn ceremony at the Governor's House here on Friday. Honorable Chief Justice Lahore High Court (LHC) Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan administered the oath to the incumbent Governor Punjab at a ceremony marked by the presence of a large number of party workers and political leadership. Earlier, Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhter Zaman read the order of appointment of

Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan by President Asif Ali Zardari. The incumbent Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan was accompanied by the outgoing Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif at the pulpit. Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, US Consul General to the incumbent Governor Punjab at a ceremony marked by the presence of a large number of party workers and political leadership. Earlier, Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhter Zaman read the order of appointment of



Commandant Frontier Constabulary Moazzam Jah Ansari calls on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor's House Peshawar.

Province's development link with maintenance of law & order: KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Commandant Frontier Constabulary, Moazzam Jah Ansari, called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor's House. The Governor directed the PESCO chief to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply and minimize load shedding. More over, Opposition Leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Abduallah Khan, provincial assembly members Jalal Khan and Sardar Shah Jehan Yousof, and former provincial president of Pakistan Party, Najamuddin Khan, along with other political and social delegations, met with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.

Akhtar Hamid Khan, also discussed electricity supply and load shedding with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor's House. The Governor directed the PESCO chief to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply and minimize load shedding. More over, Opposition Leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Abduallah Khan, provincial assembly members Jalal Khan and Sardar Shah Jehan Yousof, and former provincial president of Pakistan Party, Najamuddin Khan, along with other political and social delegations, met with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.

Karachi Corps' investiture ceremony held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The investiture ceremony of Karachi Corps was held on Friday, where Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Babar Iftikhar conferred awards of Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military), and Tamgha-i-Basalat on Army officers and soldiers as chief guest. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the next of Kin of nine Soldiers received

Tamgha-i-Basalat on behalf of Shuhada (martyrs), 14 officers were awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and 19 officers were awarded Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military) for rendering meritorious services to the nation. A large number of senior Army officers and families of awardees attended the ceremony. The Corps Commander also interacted with families of, Shuhada, and paid tributes to their sacrifices.



LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari addressing a press conference at D.G.P.R in the Provincial Capital.

Sindh Govt committed to clean the environment of Karachi: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab Friday said Sindh Government is truly committed to clean the city environment and also to reduce marine pollution in best possible manner. In this connection the Sindh Government is formulating a comprehensive strategy to combat environmental pollution, in collaboration with local and international organizations. He said this while reviewing the position of municipal waste-water treatment and its disposal through interceptor in Lyari River. Murtaza Wahab said the water quality after

the treatment is adhering to the SEQ Standards of BOD and COD. KW&SC shall within a period of two years enhance this capacity of waste-water treatment to 135 MGD by December, 2027, 300 MGD of waste-water shall be treated as per SEQ Standards, he said. He said the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) is treating 54 Million Gallons Daily (MGD) of municipal waste water which is transported through interceptor in the Lyari River at Mauripur Treatment Plant Kemari.



LAHORE: American delegation meeting with Punjab Home Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mengal, Special Home Secretary Fazal-ur-Rehman, Additional Home Secretary Shahid Mehmood and Director Civil Defence Barakullah Khan also present.

Pakistan committed to promote green investment: Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD (APP): Highlighting Pakistan's vulnerability to the diverse effects of climate change, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Friday emphasized his country's commitment to addressing climate change and promoting green investment opportunities.

He was delivering a keynote speech via online platform at the UK-Pakistan Green Investment Forum, organized by the British High Commission in Pakistan, said a press release issued by the finance ministry.

He shed light on Pakistan's disproportionate vulnerability to the devastating impacts of climate change, despite its minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions.

He cited a recent World Bank study, estimating potential annual GDP losses of up to 1% due to climate-related risks.

Acknowledging the significant funding gap in adaptation, resilience, and mitigation projects, the minister stressed the importance of bridging this divide.

He noted that the changing weather patterns

in Pakistan were impacting agricultural yields and posing threats such as flooding, storms, and heatwaves.

Expressing gratitude to the British High Commission for organizing the forum, the minister acknowledged the need for a better portfolio of green investment projects.

He emphasized Pakistan's reliance on the private sector for support and highlighted the government's efforts to enhance investor confidence in bankable green opportunities.

The minister also outlined Pakistan's plans to utilize innovative financing instruments to raise international climate finance. He said that the government was working on issuing domestic green Sukuk bonds by December 2024 to finance sustainable development projects.

He elaborated on the significant improvements in various macroeconomic indicators over the past 10 months. He provided an overview of the country's macroeconomic stability, including improvements in inflation, GDP growth in the agricultural sector, increased forex reserves, upward trend in stock market and the projected reduction of the Current Account Deficit.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on Trade related matters.

PM for trade policies to facilitate businesses and enhance export

Calls for strategy to evaluate performance of TIO in Pakistan embassies in other countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to formulate the trade policies with a core objective of facilitating the business sector, calling for urgent measures to enhance the competitiveness of the country's exports.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting on the trade sector, called for steps to promote exports of non-traditional goods and instructed for immediate payment of the certified duty drawback of the exporters.

Highlighting the

significance of the private sector, he instructed to ensure consultation with them during the policy-making and implement the deletion policy to uplift the auto sector. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the relevant ministry to devise a comprehensive strategy to scrutinize the performance of trade and investment officers posted in Pakistan's missions abroad, by rewarding the good performers and removing the incompetent ones.

The prime minister told the meeting that he would personally carry out

the fortnightly review of the export sectors.

In the meeting, the prime minister was told that the discussion on the Free Trade Agreement between Pakistan and the Gulf states was in the final stage and transit trade agreements with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had already been materialized. It was told that during the recent Pak-Saudi Business Conference, around 450 business-to-business meetings were held and that the volume of e-commerce trade was witnessing a constant increase with the

enlisting of over 3,000 firms on the Pakistan Trade Portal. The meeting was also apprised of the strict monitoring of Afghan Transit Trade, double-digit premium growth of public sector insurance companies, finalising Gem Export Framework, and in-principle approval by Pakistan and Russia to operationalise the barter trade. It was told that consultation with the stakeholders was in progress on Preferential Trade Agreements with Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, as well as on the New Strategic Trade Policy.

Pak, Korea sign Aide-Memoire for Enhanced Development Cooperation 2024-2026

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA) here on Friday signed an Aide-Memoire to chart a mid-term plan for implementation of development projects between 2024-2026.

The Aide-Memoire, which was signed at the conclusion of visit by EDCF Country Programme Mission from the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM), represents a key milestone in deepening economic ties between Pakistan and the Republic of Korea.

According to MoEA press release, the Aide-Memoire was signed by Joint Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Sajid Manzoor Asadi and Director of the Asia Team, EDCF Mission, Bonhyun Koo. The signing was witnessed by Secretary of

the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Dr Kazim Niaz and other officials from the MoEA and EDCF.

Additionally, a project concept for the construction of a Pediatric Hospital in Jamshoro was signed, with EDCF committing USD 60 million in financing for the hospital's construction in Sindh. During the course of the visit, the EDCF Mission engaged with various government departments in Pakistan, including the Ministry of Planning, the National Highway Authority, Provincial Planning & Development Departments, and others, to discuss and refine the proposed development agenda.

The EDCF mission's objectives also included knowledge sharing and capacity building, which both sides agreed to further enhance in the coming years.



QUETTA: Vice President Quetta Chamber of Commerce Syed Abdul Ahad Agha cutting ribbon to inaugurate 3-day Furniture Exhibition.

Short-term inflation eases by 1.39 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 1.39 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on May 09, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 312.56 points as compared to 316.95 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 22.32 per cent.

The weekly SPI with =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.99 per cent and went down to 303.24 points from last week's 306.26 points. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517, Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 1.00 per cent, 1.35 per cent, 1.49 and 1.53 per cent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 12 (23.53%) items increased, 13 (25.49%) items decreased and 26 (50.98%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis.



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Sajid Manzoor Asadi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Mr. Bonhyun Koo, Director of the Asia Team, EDCF Mission signs an Aide-Memoire to chart a mid-term plan for implementation of development projects between 2024-2026. The signing was witnessed by Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and other officials from the MoEA and EDCF.

Atif Ikram says: Korea should benefit by investing in SEZs to increase regional ties

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Office Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Karim Aziz Malik meeting with Ambassador of South Korea Park Kajeon at the Federation Office, President FPCCI Atif Ikram said in his message regarding the meeting that Korea has benefited by

Pakistan is an important country in terms of investment for the world. Pakistan has important sectors like agriculture, gems and jewellery, mines and minerals, marble and granite, entertainment in which Korean investors can invest. Pakistan-Korea Joint Business Council will be formed soon.

Chairman Capital



investing in CPEC projects and special economic zones to increase regional connectivity and free trade agreement for the promotion of trade has proved to be beneficial for both countries.

Pakistan, with a population of 240 million, is connected to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, due to which

Office Karim Aziz Malik said that bilateral trade between the two countries is one and a half billion dollars, which requires joint efforts to increase.

Federation of Chambers of Pakistan, Trade Development Authority is organizing Gems and Jewellery Exhibition in September this year.

Plan being implemented to increase soybean cultivation: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani on Friday said that the plan to increase the cultivation and production of soybean in Punjab was being implemented as per the direction of Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz.

He said this while inspecting trials of different types of soybeans at University of Agriculture Faisalabad, said a press release issued here.

Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said that soybean cultivation in the province would help reduce its import bill. While giving instructions, he said, that the field staff of the Agriculture department

should provide awareness to the farmers about the latest soybean production technology.

As a result of the efforts and experiments of agricultural scientists in Punjab, varieties of good productivity had been introduced, he said and added that Soybean was an excellent source of protein and edible oil.

He further said that local soybean production would be beneficial for the poultry industry.

Punjab Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said that local soybean production would save a good amount of foreign exchange which was used for its import.

Rupee gains 08 paise against US dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Friday gained 08 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.12 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.20.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, stood at Rs 277.10 and Rs 279.60 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.31 to Rs.299.93 from Rs 298.62, according to the latest economic data of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained constant at Rs 1.78 whereas an increase of Rs1.48 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 348.59 compared to the last closing of Rs 347.11.

The Emirates Dirham decreased by 03 paise whereas Saudi Riyal went down by 2 paise and were traded at Rs 75.72 and Rs 74.15 respectively.

Gold rates increase by Rs.4,600

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs.4,600 and was traded at Rs.243,800 on Friday against its sale at Rs. 239,200 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.3,944 to Rs.209,019 from Rs 205,075 whereas as the prices of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs.191,601 from Rs 187,986, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs.30 to Rs2,650 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.25.72 to Rs2,271.94.

NEPRA directs DISCOs, KE to revisit load-shedding activities during exam

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Friday directed all power distribution companies (DISCOs) and K-Electric to revisit all load shedding activities, especially during the duration of exam papers.

The DISCOs and K-E were directed to take all necessary actions to comply with this directive, prioritizing the smooth conduct of exams and the well-being of students, said a statement issued here. Failure to adhere to

SBP provides practicable foundation for elimination of Riba: Chief Manager

FAISALABAD (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has provided a solid and practicable foundation for elimination of Riba by December 31, 2027, though still the share of Islamic banking is only 20pc in the overall banking sector.

This was stated by Waqas Kashif Bajawa, Chief Manager SBP, while addressing an awareness session about Islamic export refinance scheme (IERS) at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He said regulation had been

provided for the Islamic banking in addition to finalising procedures to issue licences for Islamic banks. "Similarly, steps are also being taken for transformation of conventional banks into Islamic banks," he said and added that on the demand side, a comprehensive awareness campaign had been launched. "During these events, Sharia scholars try to remove the reservations and apprehensions of the people about the Islamic banking".

"It is important that uninterrupted power supply is maintained for electricity consumers, with particular emphasis on ensuring no load shedding occurs during exam sessions," it further said.

It has come to the notice of NEPRA, through various channels including print media, electronic media, and complaints received by NEPRA, that during exam sessions, distribution companies have been carrying out load shedding, it said.



Kick off meeting between Karandaaz Pakistan, FBR and Ministry of Finance on Digitalization of tax system took place at FBR Headquarters in Islamabad.

PSX stays bullish, gains 427 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 427.45 points, a positive change of 0.59 per cent, closing at 73,085.50 points against 72,658.05 points the previous trading day.

A total of 741,196,400 shares valuing Rs 25,268 billion were traded during the day as compared to 674,981,699 shares valuing Rs 24,053 billion the last day. Some 381 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 217 of them recorded gains and 132 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 32 remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom.

PTCL's 'Flash Fiber' reaches 500,000 user milestone, reflecting rapid growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's fastest Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) service, PTCL's Flash Fiber has demonstrated swift growth to reach the milestone of 500,000 customers nationwide. The service revolutionizes internet connectivity in Pakistan, besides offering a host of integrated ICT services to transform the experience of its customers.

PTCL Group is rapidly expanding its fiber network in Pakistan, upgrading from copper to improve digital experiences and customer satisfaction. Currently, PTCL's Flash Fiber service links 79 cities across the nation and is expanding further, said a news release issued here on Friday.

Flash Fiber achieved this milestone at an unmatched pace in Pakistan's telecom sector, highlighting its exceptional popularity due to its rapid speeds, flawless connectivity, and a range of complementary digital offerings, such as PTCL Group's premier OTT service, SHOQ.

Celebrating this significant milestone, Hatem Bamatraf, President and Group CEO of PTCL & Ufone 4G, expressed, "We are thrilled by the enthusiastic response to our FTTH service 'Flash Fiber', which is designed to revolutionize user experiences, support smart home setups and enhance digital lifestyles in Pakistan. We firmly believe that high-speed and reliable internet connectivity acts as a catalyst for economic growth and social advancement, as it drives a substantial portion of the economy and opens doors to progress and development. We are strategically expanding our fiber network with the aim of making high-quality internet connectivity easily accessible to every internet user in Pakistan."

High-speed connectivity also touches upon softer aspects including leisure and entertainment. On the back of Flash Fiber's blazing speeds, PTCL is enriching user experience by providing premium content through its IPTV.



QUETTA: A delegation of Mines Owners meeting with Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoaib Noshervani.

Israel strikes Rafah as talks yield no breakthrough

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Israeli tanks and warplanes bombarded areas of Rafah on Thursday, Palestinian residents said, after President Joe Biden said the United States would withhold weapons from Israel if its forces mount a major invasion of the southern Gaza city.

A senior Israeli official said that the latest round of indirect negotiations in Cairo to halt hostilities had ended and Israel would proceed with its operation in Rafah and other parts of the Gaza Strip as planned.

Israel has submitted to mediators its reservations about a Hamas proposal for a prisoners' release deal and the Israeli delegation was returning from the Egyptian capital, the official added.

In Gaza, Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic

Jihad said their fighters fired anti-tank rockets and mortars at Israeli tanks massed on the eastern outskirts of the city.

Residents and medics in Rafah said an Israeli attack by a mosque killed at least three people and wounded others in the eastern Brazil neighbourhood.

On the city's eastern edge, residents said a helicopter opened fire, while drones hovered above houses in several areas, some close to rooftops.

Israel claims Hamas fighters are hiding in Rafah, where the population has been swelled by hundreds of thousands of Gazans seeking refuge from bombardments elsewhere in the coastal enclave, and it needs to eliminate them for its own security.

One of the displaced, Mohammad Abderr-

Rahman, said he feared the Israeli bombardments presaged an invasion of the city.

Ceasefire talks in Egypt's capital made some headway, but no deal was reached, according to two Egyptian security sources.

The Hamas delegation left for Doha for consultations, blaming Israel for the lack of agreement so far.

Israel has said it is open to a truce, but has rejected demands for an end to bombing as it has vowed to demolish Hamas.

Biden, who says Israel has not produced a convincing plan to safeguard civilians in Rafah, issued his starkest warning yet against a full ground invasion.

"I made it clear that if they go into Rafah, ... I'm not supplying the weapons," Biden told CNN in an interview on Wednesday.



Smoke billows from a building which caught fire after fresh Israeli attacks in the Zaytoun neighbourhood of Gaza City.

Putin reappoints his prime minister, a technocrat who has kept a low political profile

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin reappointed Mikhail Mishustin as the country's prime minister on Friday, a widely anticipated move to keep on a technocrat who has maintained a low political profile. Mishustin and other technocrats in the Cabinet have been credited with maintaining a relatively stable economic performance despite bruising Western sanctions for Russia's role in Ukraine.

Most other Cabinet mem-

Several dead in protests in Afghanistan

Monitoring Desk
KABUL: Several people were killed when a demonstration broke out in eastern Afghanistan on Thursday after Taliban authorities ordered residents to vacate the land on the road between provincial capital Jalalabad and the border with Pakistan to make way for a new customs building, said Arafat Mohajer, the head of the information and culture department for the Torkham border point.

The Taliban authorities had ordered residents to vacate the land on the road between provincial capital Jalalabad and the border with Pakistan to make way for a new customs building, said Arafat Mohajer, the head of the information and culture department for the Torkham border point.

Ireland and Spain could recognise Palestinian state this month

Monitoring Desk
DUBLIN/LJUBLJANA: Ireland and Spain alongside various European Union member states, are considering 'recognising' a Palestinian state on the 21 of May, according to a report published by Ireland's national broadcaster.

RTE News' stated on Wednesday evening that contacts between Dublin and Madrid and between Slovenia and Malta, had 'intensified with a view to the countries jointly recognising' Palestinian statehood.

The report reveals that countries have been anticipating a vote of the United Nations General Assembly, on May 10. The vote may well lead to the recognition of Palestinians as 'qualified' to become a 'full members of the United Nations'.

In a joint statement issued on the 22 of March, Spain, Ireland, Malta and Slovenia said they had 'agreed to take the first steps' towards recognising a Palestinian state.

Spain and Ireland have been champions of Palestinian rights, for quite a while.

Maldives moves to mend ties with India

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: The Maldives pledged 'enduring friendship' with India on Thursday ahead of a deadline for New Delhi to withdraw a troop garrison from the luxury tourist destination that has strained ties between the neighbours.

Pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu won office last year while campaigning on a promise to downgrade ties with India, and has since reoriented the strategically placed archipelago nation towards Beijing.

UN to vote on resolution that would grant Palestine new rights and revive its UN membership bid

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The U.N. General Assembly is expected to vote Friday on a resolution that would grant new 'rights and privileges' to Palestine and call on the Security Council to favorably reconsider its request to become the 194th member of the United Nations. The United States vetoed a widely backed council resolution on April 18 that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine, a goal the Palestinians have long sought and Israel has worked to prevent, and U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood made clear Thursday the Biden administration is opposed to the assembly resolution.

Under the U.N. Charter, prospective members of the United Nations must be 'peace-loving,' and the Security Council must recom-

Philippines calls for expelling Chinese diplomats as South China Sea row escalates

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: The Philippines' national security adviser called on Friday for Chinese diplomats to be expelled over an alleged leak of a phone conversation with a Filipino admiral in a significant escalation of a bitter row over the South China Sea. China's embassy in Manila had orchestrated 'repeated acts of engaging and dissemination of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation', with the objective of sowing discord, division and disunity, Eduardo Ano said in a statement. Those actions 'should not be allowed to pass unchallenged without serious penalty', he said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian called the comments provocative and said Chinese diplomats in the Philippines had to be allowed to do their job. 'China solemnly requests the Philip-

The United States is expected to announce a new \$400 million package of weapons for Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The U.S. is expected to announce a new \$400 million package of military aid for Ukraine on Friday, U.S. officials said, as Kyiv struggles to hold off advances by Russian troops in the northeast Kharkiv region.

This is the third tranche of aid for Ukraine since Congress passed supplemental funding in late April after months of gridlock. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had warned Thursday that his country was facing 'a really difficult situation' in the east, but said a new supply of U.S. weapons was coming and 'we will be able to stop them.'

According to officials, the package includes artillery, air defense and anti-tank munitions, armored vehicles and other weapons and equipment. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the aid has not yet been announced. It will be provided through presidential drawdown au-

Police, demonstrators clash at Amsterdam's Gaza demo

Monitoring Desk
THE HAGUE: Dutch riot police clashed with pro-Palestinian demonstrators on Wednesday after moving in to 'clear barricades' at Amsterdam's main university. Images from local television outlets showed dozens of police officers (wearing riot gear) 'exchanging' baton blows with a group of protesters, when officers started clearing out an area in front of the Binnengasthuis building, within Amsterdam's city centre. 'The operation has been authorised by the mayor,' they stated. The UvA alleged charges including 'disturbing the peace and destruction of property'. Images on the local AT5 channel portrayed police arresting demonstrators, numbering a few hundred.

They went so far as 'roughly pulling' one individual off a front-end loader. Another protester attempted to stop a loader before jumping into a canal, to evade police attempts at making an arrest. Images further showed police surrounding and dragging away a small yet vocal group of protesters who remained on campus, while a front-end loader was 'pushing material used to put up the barricades into a canal'. Protesters here too, were waving placards which read 'Free Palestine' and shouted 'Shame on you' at police officers.

Police allege protesters were not 'just' students, but contained elements 'who were not affiliated to the university and were deliberately seeking conflict with the police.'

The Amsterdam city council is due to host an emergency debate regarding the ongoing demonstrations on Friday. Campus protests have also sprung up across the United States in weeks gone by, with students calling upon universities to cut direct or indirect financial ties with US weapons manufacturers and Israeli institutions. The rallies have rocked colleges campuses' and slowly but surely, have begun spreading across the globe. Pro-Israel counter-protesters at the University of California, Los Angeles, physically attacked demonstrators at an encampment.



Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, arrive to meet students at the Lightway Academy up on their arrival in Abuja, Nigeria.

Georgia to push ahead with foreign agent bill despite 'misled' protesters, PM says

Monitoring Desk
TBILISI: Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said on Friday that the government would push ahead with the bill on 'foreign agents' despite opposition from what he cast as 'misled' youngsters who feel resentment towards Russia.

The legislation, which would require organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from abroad to register as agents of foreign influence, has sparked street protests in Georgia by those who see it as authoritarian and Russian-inspired.

Georgia's envoy to France resigned in protest over the bill on Thursday, becoming the first senior official to do so.

The government says the law - which has been heavily criticized by the European Union and the

India's top court releases jailed Modi opponent

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: India's top court on Friday ordered a jailed opponent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be released on bail, allowing him to campaign in an ongoing national election.

Arvind Kejriwal, chief minister of the capital Delhi and a key leader in an opposition alliance formed to compete against Modi in the polls, was detained in March over a long-running corruption probe.

He is among several leaders of the bloc under criminal investigation, with one of his colleagues describing his arrest the month before the election as a 'political conspiracy' orchestrated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Supreme court Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said Kejriwal could leave custody until June 1, the last day of voting in the six-week election.

Two Paris officers wounded after man shoots them inside police station

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: A man shot and wounded two police officers in Paris after he got hold of one of the officer's weapons while he was being held at a police station, said Paris police chief Laurent Nunez on Friday, confirming earlier media reports.

A source close to the case said the incident happened in the French capital's 13th district shortly before 10:30pm (8:30pm GMT), and that one of the officers' wounds were life-threatening.

The Paris public prosecutor's office later confirmed the source's account to AFP.



Activists form a human chain next to police forces during a protest against the expansion of the Tesla Gigafactory in Gruenheide near Berlin, Germany.

Germany sees spate of attacks on politicians; minister struck on head

Monitoring Desk
BERLIN: German police on Wednesday arrested a 74-year-old man suspected of hitting a former mayor of Berlin in the head, the latest in a rash of assaults against politicians in Germany.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz blasted the attacks against politicians as 'outrageous and cowardly', stressing that violence did not belong in a democratic debate. Franziska Giffey was at a library on Tuesday afternoon when the suspect came up from behind her to hit her in the head and neck with a bag containing hard objects, police said.

Giffey, who is now

US ship sails through disputed strait

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: A US warship sailed through the narrow Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, less than two weeks before Taiwan's new president takes office, prompting an angry denunciation from Beijing.

Taiwanese defence and coast guard officials said on Thursday dozens of Chinese warplanes and ships had been detected around the island, less than two weeks before self-ruled Taiwan's inauguration for a new president. The Chinese military presence around the island announced by Taipei, which included another 23 warplanes and five naval vessels in the 24 hours leading up to 6 am.

Meta's oversight board backs takedown of Australian voter fraud posts

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY: Meta's oversight board upheld a decision to remove two Facebook posts calling for Australians to vote multiple times in an indigenous rights referendum, but noted the social media giant had not adequately explained its ban on encouraging voter fraud.

The board, which is funded by Meta but run independently, said Meta was correct to protect the democratic process by preventing voter fraud when it proactively pulled the

British girl's hearing restored after groundbreaking gene therapy

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: An 18-month-old British girl, born completely deaf, is believed to be the youngest person in history to have had their hearing restored. The girl underwent a groundbreaking new form of gene therapy.

Numerous medical teams across the globe (including in China and the United States), have been engaged in trialling similar treatments (with good results), for hereditary deafness that is focused on a rare genetic mutation.



Protesters carry a Palestinian flag during the Stop Israel demonstration against Israel's participation in the 68th edition of the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), amid the ongoing conflict in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Malmö, Sweden.

President for global efforts to address climate change

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Asif Ali Zardari has underlined the need for global efforts to address the challenge of climate change by adopting environment-friendly technology, promoting afforestation, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He highlighted that global warming and climate change were affecting the glaciers as well as causing water scarcity and tackling these challenges required global support to mitigate their adverse impacts.

The President expressed these views while talking to the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan/COP 29 President-designate, Mr Mukhtar Babayev, who along with his delegation called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Azerbaijan is going to host the 29th Conference of Parties to the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 29) in Baku in November 2024 and the Minister, in his capacity as the President-designate of COP 29, is here to invite the President to the Conference.

Welcoming the Minister, the President congratulated Azerbaijan on winning the bid to host COP 29 and expressed the hope that COP 29 would result in setting the New Collective Quantified Goal on Finance that would help developing countries fulfil their climate finance needs. He highlighted that Pakistan had planted mangrove forests over hundreds of thousands of hectares that would help protect the environment, besides earning carbon credits for Pakistan.

The President said that Pakistan highly valued its relations with

Azerbaijan and wanted to further expand bilateral cooperation in the areas of common interest. He called for promoting more interactions, bilateral exchanges and people-to-people contacts to further cement relations between the two brotherly countries.

Mr Mukhtar Babayev underlined the need for further enhancing bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, particularly in the area of tourism and culture. He also delivered the invitation to the President to participate in COP 29 in Baku in November 2024. The President conveyed his best wishes for the successful hosting of COP 29 and expressed the hope that Azerbaijan would play its role to secure the interest of developing countries in meeting their financing needs for climate adaptation.



ISLAMABAD: The Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, Mr Mukhtar Babayev, along with his delegation, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Cabinet committee principally approves 24 entities for Privatisation Programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCOP), principally and for the time being, on Friday approved 24 State Owned Enterprises for the Privatisation Programme, directing the Privatisation Ministry to deliberate the phasing of each entity in consultation with the respective ministries. The committee, which met here under the chair of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, was presented with a phased Privatisation Programme (2024-29) by the Ministry of Privatisation, based on the recommendations of PC Board, said a press release.

The meeting was also attended by other committee members including the finance minister, minister for commerce, minister for privatisation, minister for industries and production, governor State Bank of Pakistan, chairman SECP besides federal secretaries of various ministries and divisions.

The CCOP recommended that priority shall be accorded to privatisation of loss-making entities while the federal footprint shall be limited only to the Strategic and Essential SOEs under the federal government's domain.

The CCOP emphasized that even the SOE

making profits shall be considered for privatisation.

After deliberating on the privatisation policy guidelines, the CCOP considered 84 SOEs in detail in light of SOE Act and Policy.

Following the deliberations, the committee recommended that 40 SOEs, categorized as Strategic or Essential, shall be placed by respective ministries before the Cabinet Committee on State Owned Enterprises (CCSOE) for their categorization as Strategic or Essential.

Those SOEs which would not be categorized as Strategic or Essential shall be included in the Privatisation Programme.

Azeri minister calls on PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Ecology & Natural Resources of Azerbaijan Mukhtar Babayev Friday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the PM House and handed over an invitation letter to him from President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to participate in the COP-29 meeting to be held in Baku in November 2024.

The prime minister thanked the President of Azerbaijan for the invitation, and congratulated him and the Azeri people on Baku's selection for hosting COP-29, the most important gathering of world leaders this year to deliberate upon the challenges posed by climate change.

He said that Pakistan was one of the most vulnerable countries that had borne the adverse impact of climate change in recent years, including the catastrophic floods of 2022.

He stressed the need

for urgent action to enhance climate resilience. In this regard, he assured Azerbaijan of Pakistan's full support and cooperation in ensuring the success of COP-29.

While accepting the invitation, the prime minister said he looked forward to participating in COP-29 where he would also have the opportunity to have detailed discussion with President Ilham Aliyev on the bilateral relationship, particularly to enhance bilateral trade and investment.

PM Shehbaz also reiterated his invitation to President Aliyev to undertake an official visit to Pakistan. The Azeri minister thanked the prime minister for receiving him and offering Pakistan's support for the successful organization of the COP-29. He said the Azeri side would work closely with Pakistan to set an agenda that suitably reflects the needs of climate vulnerable countries.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mukhtar Babayev calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Dar visit to China vital part of institutional exchanges: Lin Jian

BEIJING (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mohammad Ishaq Dar's first official visit to China from May 13-16 is an important part of the institutional exchanges between the foreign ministries of Pakistan and China, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Lin Jian said on Friday.

Ishaq Dar will pay an official visit to China and hold the fifth round of the Foreign Minister-Level China-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue from May 13 to 16, he announced during his regular briefing held here.

Dar was invited by Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese foreign minister, Lin said.

Evaluating the current China-Pakistan relations, the spokesperson said, the visit is Dar's first official visit to China after he assumed the post of deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Pakistan, and is also an important part of the institutional exchanges between the two foreign ministries.

He said, China is willing to work with the Paki-

stani side to take this visit as an opportunity to further implement the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries.

Terming China and Pakistan as all-weather strategic partners and ironclad friends, he said, in recent years, the two countries have maintained close high-level exchanges and exchanges at all levels, joined hands to cope with changes in the international and regional situation, deepened mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation, and pushed forward the China-Pakistan friendship, which has become stronger over the years.

After the completion of the elections in Pakistan this year, President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Chairman Zhao Leji sent congratulatory messages to the Pakistani leaders at the first opportunity, expressing China's sincere congratulations and good wishes, he added.

The spokesperson said, the Chinese side is willing to carry forward the traditional friendship between China and Pakistan, strengthen strategic communication and coordination, deepen practical cooperation in various fields.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Religious Affairs Zulfiqar Haider along with Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan seeing off Hajj Pilgrims.

Ahsan Iqbal meets Vice Chairman, NDRC in Beijing

BEIJING (APP): Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal held a meeting with Vice Chairman, of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Zhao Chenxin at the NDRC headquarters here on Friday.

The Minister was accompanied by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, Khalil Hashmi, and other senior officials of the Embassy.

Recalling the launch of CPEC a decade ago, the Minister said, the decade of CPEC has been a remarkable journey, since 2013, the relevant institutions from

the two sides have worked as one team and successfully implemented key energy and physical infrastructure projects, laying a strong foundation for the next phase of CPEC.

Zhao Chenxin appreciated the role and leadership of the Minister of Planning & Development in making CPEC a success. He said you are greatly respected for your valuable contribution towards CPEC.

While reviewing progress during the first phase of CPEC, both sides expressed their resolve to accelerate the progress on the high-quality development of the Project, as it transitions to its next

phase.

Recalling the five Corridors, announced by Vice Premier He Lifeng during his visit to Pakistan last year, the Minister for Planning renewed the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to even further enhance the socio-economic benefits of CPEC, with significant improvement to the lives and livelihoods of the people. Emphasizing the importance of deepening bilateral energy cooperation, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal conveyed to the Chinese side the interest of the Government of Pakistan to diversify the country's energy mix through the transition towards clean and renewable energy.

Pakistan, Italy agree to enhance cooperation to combat human trafficking

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mirelena Armellini at the Ministry of Interior here Friday. During the meeting, bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest were discussed.

The interior minister reiterated Pakistan's commitment to combat human trafficking, stating that a zero-tolerance policy has been adopted against human smuggling mafias.

He emphasized that those involved in human

trafficking would not only face imprisonment but also financial penalties. He further stated that skilled Pakistani workers would be sent to Italy through legal channels, who will contribute to the remittances.

During the meeting, it was also agreed to sign an agreement to prevent illegal entry of Pakistanis into Italy and to enhance mutual cooperation in this regard.

The minister directed the concerned authorities to finalize the agreement at the earliest.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Ambassador of Italy H.E. Mirelena Armellini.

'Route to Makkah' project inaugurated for enhanced services for pilgrims at IIA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary Religious Affairs, Zulfiqar Haider, alongside Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, formally inaugurated the 'Route to Makkah' project at Islamabad International Airport (IIA) on Friday.

In attendance were senior officials from Religious Affairs, Civil Aviation Authority, Anti-Narcotics, Airport Security Force,

and members of the media.

Addressing the media, the Secretary of Religious Affairs said the Saudi immigration and customs procedures for Hajj pilgrims departing from Islamabad would now be efficiently conducted in Islamabad itself. Consequently, these pilgrims would swiftly navigate through the Saudi airport and proceed to their destinations without delay, he added.

Madinah: 3,485 Pakistani Hujjaj arrive in seamless flight operation

MADINAH AL MUNAWWARAH (APP): A month-long pre-Hajj flight operation, which started on May 9, is taking momentum with each passing day as different airlines operated 15 flights in two days to transport around 3,485 Pakistani Hujjaj to Madinah Al Munawwarah in first leg of their spiritual journey to perform Hajj.

Out of these, seven

flights have been operated from Islamabad and Karachi under the Road to Makkah project, an initiative of the Saudi government to streamline the immigration process for pilgrims to Makkah.

The initiative, launched in 2019, has so far been implemented in five countries including Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Morocco and Bangladesh.



QUETTA: Activists of Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) are holding protest demonstration against desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden, at Quetta press club.

PR decides to operate Chaman passenger from Quetta on daily basis

QUETTA: The Pakistan Railways has decided to operate the Chaman Passenger train from Quetta to Chaman from May 13, 2024 on daily basis.

According to the PR sources, the Chaman Passenger would be operated from Quetta to Chaman on daily basis from May 13 onward.

According to the schedule, the Passenger train would depart from Quetta to Chaman at 08:00 AM daily and reach Chaman at 12:30 PM.

The same train (Passenger) would leave Chaman for Quetta at 01:45 PM and would reach Quetta at 05:45 PM the same day.

It may be mentioned here that the Passenger train used to run from Quetta to Chaman thrice a week.

PTA urges to block all social media accounts of Adil Raja

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society (PESS) has registered a complaint with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to close the social media accounts of anti-Pakistan propagandist fugitive Adil Raja.

The PESS sent a letter to the PTA and made it clear that the Society has nothing to do with what Adil Raja posts on social media.

It has been said in the letter that Adil Raja, who is spreading negative propaganda against the country, started misusing the PESS platform after fleeing abroad in 2022.

The letter said Adil Raja was the media coordinator of the PESS till 2018. While escaping, Adil Raja took with him the passwords of social media platforms of the Society including X (Twitter) accounts.

SC fixes govt's plea against verdict in NAB amend. case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday fixed govt's plea challenging the verdict in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendments case for hearing.

On September 15, 2023, the Supreme Court of Pakistan struck down amendments made to National Accountability Bureau laws as it announced its reserved verdict.

In the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder's plea.

A five-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa will take up the plea on May 14.

stani side to take this visit as an opportunity to further implement the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries.

Terming China and Pakistan as all-weather strategic partners and ironclad friends, he said, in recent years, the two countries have maintained close high-level exchanges and exchanges at all levels, joined hands to cope with changes in the international and regional situation, deepened mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation, and pushed forward the China-Pakistan friendship, which has become stronger over the years.

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QUETTA: Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani meeting with Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

25k cattle vaccinated during free mobile vet camps organized in remote parts

Rafiqullah Mandokhail ZHOB: "The livestock sector plays an important role in the rural economy in poverty-hit Balochistan. The livestock rearing is the primary source of livelihood as the rural economy is heavily reliant on livestock," said District Livestock Officer at Livestock and Dairy Development Zhub Dr Naseebullah Kakar.

He said, keeping in mind the crucial role of livestock sector in the rural economy, on the special directives of provincial minister Livestock and Dairy Development Bakht Muhammad Kakar, Secretary Muhammad Tayyab Lehri and Director General Dr Farooq Tareen, free mobile veterinary camps have been organized in different villages of Dana Abdullah Zai - a remote and mountainous part of the district and Qamar Din Karez - close to Pak-Afghan border.

"Under the supervi-

sion of District Livestock Officer Dr Naseebullah Kakar, over 25,000 cattle have been vaccinated and free medicines have been provided to the cattle owners," he told journalist Rafiqullah Mandokhail.

The people of the area have thanked the provincial minister and the livestock officer for organizing free vet camps and said that Dana Abdullah Zai and Qamar Din Karez are far-off hilly areas, where the only source of livelihood is livestock. By organizing free veterinary camps, various animal diseases have been prevented through vaccination.

Dr. Naseebullah Kakar has said that the livestock sector has potential to support the livelihood of the rural population as it is a key source of employment for a large population of Balochistan. Sheep, goats, cows and camels are reared extensively in Balochistan.

ICUBE-Q's initial images from space a historic day: Ambassador Hashmi

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi on Friday received initial images by Pakistan's lunar satellite from orbit a historic day and said Pakistan's involvement in the ICUBE-Q aboard the Change-6 probe is a testament to the nation's growing prowess in space exploration and technology.

"This marks Pakistan's first lunar orbital

mission and showcases our advanced knowledge, design capabilities, and multidisciplinary expertise, he said while speaking at the inaugural data delivery ceremony.

Zhang Kejian, head of the China National Space Administration handed the data carrier over to Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi at a ceremony held here.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Environment Naseemur Rehman meeting with Provincial Minister for Women Development Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi.

Arrears against defaulters reach Rs. 633b: QESCO initiates operation for recovery of arrears from defaulters

Independent Report QUETTA: The Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO) has launched operation for recovery of arrears of the electricity from defaulters in the province.

According to the spokesman of QESCO, the operation has been launched for recovery of the arrears from the government and private institutions, which run in billions of rupees.

He mentioned that the arrears of QESCO against the defaulters have reached Rs. 633 billion in the province.

Out of the total arrears, the amount of Rs. 483.56 billion are outstanding against the agriculture consumers of the province.

Besides, the government of Balochistan has to

pay Rs. 51.48 billion on account of the subsidy on agriculture, the spokesman of QESCO informed.

Similarly, the federal government has to pay Rs. 22.55 billion on account of the agricultural subsidy.

Besides, the arrears of Rs. 37.79 billion are outstanding against the provincial government and its subordinate departments while the arrears of Rs. 2.48 billion are payable against the federal government and its subordinate departments in Balochistan.

Moreover, the dues of Rs. 35.15 billion are outstanding against the domestic, commercial and other consumers in the province.

The QESCO spokesman said that the notices are being issued to the defaulters for payment of arrears.

Suo motu notice against VCs appointment in government universities fixed for hearing

ISLAMABAD (Online): Suo motu notice on appointment of vice chancellors in government universities has been fixed for hearing.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the Chief Justice (CJ) of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa will hear the case on May 15.

SC had sought report from federal and provincial governments in connection with appointment of vice chancellors during previous hearing.

Iran decides to repatriate illegal Afghans in view of terror threat

TEHRAN (Online): Iran has decided to repatriate illegal Afghans in view of the terror threat.

According to the Iranian Interior Minister, more than 1.3 million illegal immigrants were sent back from Iran so far.

The Iranian Interior Minister also indicated to take strict measures to prevent the return of illegal Afghan citizens to Iran in the future.

Bodies of 7 labourers of Gawadar incident shifted to Khanewal

KHANEWAL (APP): The bodies of seven labourers who killed in the Gawadar tragedy have shifted to Khanewal.

The relatives received the bodies of their loved ones from the Shamkot Motorway Interchange.

On this occasion senior officers of the district administration and police, public personalities were present.