

Independent

dailyindish@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

www.dailyindependent.com.pk

Gwadar

Ph: 2841470/2841473 Vol: XX No. 12, Muharram 05, 1446 AH Friday July 12, 2024, Pages 04, Price Rs.15



Prime Minister of Pakistan H.E. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev leading their respective delegations during bilateral talks in Islamabad.

Pak, Azerbaijan agree to expand investment volume upto \$2 bn

This connection is a big asset, we are brothers, we are friends, and we support each other on every international issue: Aliyev

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Azerbaijan on Thursday agreed to enhance the bilateral investment level of up to US\$2 billion in areas of mutual beneficial projects. In a joint press stakeout along with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, after witnessing signing of agreements and MoUs in diverse areas between the two countries, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said "we have discussed an initial figure of \$2 billion investment in areas of mutual beneficial projects".

The prime minister hoped that when he will visit Azerbaijan in November this year, the two sides would be ready to ink agreements worth \$2 billion to start with, as there was great potential

in both sides to multiply this figure in years to come. "In today's in depth conversation, we have agreed to enhance our bilateral trade besides discussing areas of joint cooperation and joint investments," he added. The prime minister said, "The bilateral investment volume of less than \$100 million does not reflect the strength of our brotherhood and friendship

in the field of joint investment in areas which are mutually beneficial". Expressing satisfaction over the bilateral meeting, the prime minister said discussions were held on mutual trust and confidence where both sides expressed their unwavering commitment to move forward and touch higher levels of achievements in the fields of trade and investment.

President criticises PML-N-led govt over its handling of IMF deal and its reliance on loans

'We know how to form and topple governments' Zardari warns PML-N

Monitoring Desk
LAHORE: President Asif Ali Zardari has criticised the PML-N-led government over its handling of International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal and its reliance on loans.

"The IMF loans are a test for the public," Zardari said, accusing the PML-N of failing to manage the government effectively. "We know how to form and dismantle governments," he declared, promising that the PPP would take decisive action.

Party leaders voiced their concerns about the lack of cooperation from the Punjab and federal governments. "We are not getting

our full rights," a leader complained, pointing out that electoral issues remain unresolved.

Zardari assured the leaders of addressing their grievances directly, stating his commitment to active engagement in Islamabad and Lahore. He emphasized the PPP's unmatched capability in Pakistani politics, viewing criticism of the party as a form of recognition. Directing the PPP Punjab leadership to collaborate in resolving internal issues, Zardari affirmed, "We are conducting a test of the people by taking IMF loans. The Muslim League (N) is not in power. We know how to form and

dismantle governments. We will not abandon our people." He urged PPP workers to prepare for intensified efforts ahead, particularly in promoting youth leadership within the party's ranks. Zardari also called for a comprehensive report on the party's organizational structure, emphasizing the need to move beyond the politics of closed rooms and take proactive steps forward.

Previously, President Asif Ali Zardari revealed the government's intention to impose taxes on agricultural income in alignment with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions.

No designs to enter into any talks with TTP: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan says it has no designs to enter into any talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the terrorist entity is involved in the killing of Pakistani and foreign citizens inside Pakistan.

The Spokesperson said Pakistan respects Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. She said she expect the Afghan authorities to uphold their sovereignty and take action against terrorist groups which have found sanctuaries inside Afghanistan and using their territory for terrorist attacks against Pakistan.

Responding to a question, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan is committed to implement Illegal For-

eigners Repatriation Plan. She said the first phase of this plan is near completion and alluded to the illegal foreigners including Afghans repatriated to their home countries.

The spokesperson clarified that Pakistan has not given any understanding to the UNHCR for the suspension of the plan. She pointed out that the government has approved one-year extension of the validity of Proof of Registration cards of the Afghan refugees.

To a question, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan and the United States have a multifaceted and a robust partnership. She said she believe that this relationship should move forward on the basis of mutual respect, sovereign equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.



QUETTA: A view of tear gas seen during clash between Police and Baloch For Missing Person.

Spokesman Govt of Balochistan maintains: Peaceful protest everyone's right, but no one to be allowed to make Red Zone, state's institutions hostage

Independent Report
QUETTA: The spokesman, Government of Balochistan, Shahid Rind has categorically stated that peaceful protest is right of everyone, however, no one would be allowed to make the Red Zone and the institutions of state hostage all.

In a video message reacting to the protest held by the families of missing persons in Quetta city on Thursday, the spokesman said that the protest of families of missing persons was continued on Sariab road for last 10-12 days.

During this period, no action was taken against the

peaceful protest by the state's institutions.

However, the protesters marched towards Red Zone from Sariab road area, he maintained mentioning that the important buildings of High Court, Supreme Court Quetta Registry, Governor House, Chief Minister House, residences of the judges and senior government officials and civil secretariat Balochistan.

As the police tripped to intercept the protesters to enter the Red Zone, according to the police, the protesters pelted stones on them (police personnel), the spokesman added. Shahid Rind said that

the section 144 has already been imposed in Quetta city, but despite this, the protesters tried to enter the Red Zone.

He said that the police demonstrated extremely patient and tolerant behaviour with the protesters.

He said that there is clear policy about the Red zone, and no one is allowed to enter it.

The spokesman said that the State has no objection on staging peaceful protest by any person or group, but no one would be allowed to make the Red zone and the state's institutions hostage.

President for timely project completion in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday stressed the timely completion of the ongoing development projects of Balochistan and urged the provincial government to take proactive measures for the province's welfare. Talking to Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, President Zardari acknowledged that the provincial government has implemented effective measures for the development and prosperity of Balochistan and emphasized the urgent completion of the Kachhi Canal with

federal support to meet provincial water demands, boost agriculture, and ensure food security.

The President also expressed his satisfaction over the ongoing public welfare projects in the province and the measures taken by the provincial government for maintaining peace and order in the province. Bugti briefed President Zardari on provincial situation during the meeting at Presidency and briefed him on ongoing development projects, the overall law and order situation in the province.



QUETTA: Advisor to CM for Environment Naseem-ul-Rehman Mulakhail meeting with Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

Interior Minister confirms Azm-e-Istehkam Operation not commenced

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi on Thursday stated that the Azm-e-Istehkam operation has neither commenced nor has there been any discussion of operations in specific areas.

He clarified that there was a miscommunication with the media regarding the Azm-e-Istehkam operation, which is part of six points of the National Action Plan (NAP).

The interior minister provided a briefing during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Interior chaired by Senator Faisal Rahman on Thursday. The meeting was attended by the Secretary of the Interior, IG FC, and Rangers officials.

Mohsin Naqvi emphasised that the discussion was about the implementation of NAP, not about operations in any specific areas. He also

pointed out that prosecution falls under the mandate and authority of the provinces.

He highlighted that law and order control primarily lies with the provinces, which cannot be ignored. The Ministry of Interior oversees targeted operations and border security.

The interior minister mentioned ongoing operations in Punjab and Sindh with support from Rangers, and significant improvements in the security of the Main Super Highway.

Naqvi attributed the current terrorism to agreements made by the previous government with the Taliban, which led to the release of terrorists from prisons and the subsequent resurgence of terrorism. The minister noted the formation of groups of 15-20 terrorists and emphasised that ongoing operations are making progress.

Apex Court to announce verdict regarding reserved seats today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan would announce its verdict on Friday in appeal of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) regarding the reserved seats. The Registrar Office of the top court has issued the cause the list, according to which the decision would be pronounced Friday morning 9:00am. It may be mentioned here that a full court bench, presided by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa, reserved the verdict into the case on Tuesday after the respondents' lawyers concluded their arguments.

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) had upheld the verdict of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for not awarding reserved seats to SIC.

Pak-France diplomats review bilateral coop. progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): Additional Foreign Secretary (Europe) Ambassador Shafiqat Ali Khan held talks with Director (Asia & Oceania) of French Foreign Ministry Ambassador Benoit Guidée in Islamabad today.

They reviewed the progress made in the implementation of Roadmap of Bilateral Cooperation, signed last year, ahead of the next round of Pak-France Bilateral Political Consultations to be held later this year.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in a group photo with Speakers of Punjab, Sindh, KPK and Balochistan Assemblies along with Speaker of AJ&K and GB Assembly in Parliament House.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Governor directs VC UoG to make blue economy revenue generation part of strategic plan of University

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has directed to the Vice Chancellor, University of Gwadar to do research on promotion of marine and coastal tourism, bright prospects of blue economy at the coastal belt and establish modern maritime industry so that the federal and provincial governments may be informed about the prospects of economic future.

The Governor stressed that the University of Gwadar should make the blue economy revenue generation part of its strategic plan to ensure bright future of the province.

The Governor was speaking to the Vice Chancellor of UoG, Dr. Abdul Razaq Sabir and Pro-Vice Chancellor, Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, who called on him here on Thursday.

The Governor said that the economic status of the whole region can be ended with functionality of Gwadar port. But, it is our unfortunate that we couldn't benefit much from more than 700 kilometers long coastal belt.

While appreciating performance of the Vice Chancellor of Gwadar University and his whole team, the Governor urged him to expand the process of learning skills to youth of Gwadar and its adjacent areas.

He also stressed on taking effective measures for providing conducive environment to the students at University besides improving its ranking.

He also stressed the need to hold a grand seminar on blue economy and Marine tourism.

This would help us determine the political and economic priorities of near future, he added.

Food crisis looms large as flour mills go on strike across country

LAHORE (INP): A number of flour mills were eventually shut down on Thursday for an indefinite period in various parts of the country after the government failed to address concerns of the Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) regarding imposition of withholding tax on the commodity.

According to the PFMA, more than 1,500 flour mills across country have halted wheat washing and flour supply after the recent announcement of observing strike. The PFMA demands withdrawal of withholding tax on the flour.

It further said small scale flour dealers were also joining the chorus of millers in lodging their protest against the government.

In line with PFA's orders, as many as 73 flour mills in Gujranwala and more than 60 mills in Multan ceased their operations.



KARACHI: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi meeting with the Leader of Dawoodi Bohra Community Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin.

Nepra approves electricity tariff increase by up to Rs 7.12 per unit

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Thursday granted the government's request to raise the basic electricity tariff by up to Rs 7.12 per unit. This increase will be applied nationwide, including in Karachi, with households consuming up to 200 units per month being exempt from the hike for three months. The new tariff structure, as outlined in the notification, will see domestic consumers using between 201 and 300 units per

month experiencing a rise of Rs 7.12, bringing the rate to Rs 34.26 per unit.

Consumers using between 301 and 400 units will face an increase of Rs 7.02, resulting in a new rate of Rs 39.15 per unit. For those consuming between 401 and 500 units, the rate will go up by Rs 6.12 to Rs 41.36 per unit. The tariff for consumers using between 501 and 600 units will increase by Rs 6.12 to Rs 42.78 per unit, and those using between 601 and 700 units will see an increase of Rs 6.12 to Rs 43.92 per unit.

IG Police hands over 100 seized illegal vehicles to Customs dept in Quetta

QUETTA (APP): More than 100 vehicles seized in various operations of Quetta Police and Traffic Police of Quetta were handed over to Customs Department on Thursday.

On this occasion, Inspector General (IG) Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh handed over these seized vehicles to the Chief Collector of Customs Balochistan Muhammad Yaqoob Mako.

Senior officers of Balochistan Police and Customs were also present on this occasion.

All these vehicles will be auctioned soon and the money will be deposited in the national exchequer for interest of the country.

IG Police said that such operations against illegal vehicles on behalf of Quetta Police and Traffic Police would continue in the future saying that ac-

tion was being taken against non-custom paid and illegal vehicles as per the rules.

He said that the Quetta Police had taken vigorous action against non-customs vehicles during strict blockades on the entrance and exit routes of the city.

On the special directive of the Balochistan High Court, action has been taken against non-custom paid vehicles, he said.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent
 Friday July 12, 2024

Population crisis

Pakistan is the world's fifth most populous nation, yet the resources and socioeconomic tools needed to provide for over 240m souls are severely lacking. The only logical measure is to bring down the fertility rate in order to provide a better standard of living to citizens, as well as the generations to come. Unfortunately, successive governments, beyond providing lip service, have failed to act to prevent the population bomb from coming close to detonation. If we continue on this trajectory, the UNFPA projects that Pakistan's population may hit 263m by 2030, which is just around the corner. Does Pakistan have the resources to adequately feed, clothe, educate and house this massive number? The answer is worryingly self-evident.

Therefore, today, as World Population Day is being observed globally, both state and civil society must pledge to address the population issue in a progressive and sagacious manner. This can be done by declaring a 'population emergency', and committing funds and efforts to the cause of addressing the explosive population growth. While some states have taken invasive steps, such as limiting the number of children couples can have, there are better examples in the neighbourhood that do not infringe on personal rights, yet achieve the goal of planned families.

In this regard, UNFPA cites the Muslim-majority states of Turkiye, Iran and Bangladesh, which have managed to implement successful family planning programmes. As per the UN body's research, these countries succeeded because the state was fully supporting policies aimed at reducing population growth, while information and family planning services were easily available to citizens. There is no reason why Pakistan — which in the 1960s had initiated similar plans — cannot learn from these Muslim states, with which we share many cultural similarities. Perhaps the biggest factor that can give a boost to family planning campaigns is unwavering commitment from the state at the federal and provincial levels. There needs to be buy-in from political parties, as well as the clergy.

The fact is that due to the social structures in Pakistan, it is imperative to have ulema, tribal elders and other community leaders on board to successfully implement family planning programmes — from big cities to the furthest hamlets. Both men and women need to be counselled about the options available. Moreover, successful programmes, such as Lady Health Workers, can be utilised to provide information and reproductive health services to women. At the policy level, the skewed weightage given to large populations in the NFC Award formula should be reconsidered, as provincial administrations will continue to ignore rampant population growth in order to secure more funds. For a balanced future where all Pakistanis have access to food, water and basic services, a successful family planning model is essential.

Zeba Sathar

Today is World Population Day and the theme this year is 'Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope'. While the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, it has, paradoxically, also become vastly inequitable. Many citizens around the world, including those of Pakistan, continue to be highly neglected despite their lives being interwoven with those more fortunate.

UN Secretary General António Guterres has expressed concern over the achievement of the global development agenda outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, and the collection of data that measures progress towards a better world for all by 2030. A mere six years prior to the SDG deadline, he has highlighted the need for data to capture inequalities in the achievement of universally agreed goals to ensure that no one is left behind. Importantly, while Pakistan may not be recording adequate progress with regard to the SDGs, we certainly collect data to measure inequities in most development outcomes.

The country's official

statistical agency, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, has completed not one but two censuses in the last seven years! PBS also collects annual data through a range of regular surveys — the Household Integrated Economic Survey, Labour Force Survey, the Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement survey, and many others. The truth is that PBS seems to have little time to share the heaps of crucial data it collects as it is caught up collecting more.

The data of the 2023 census, which has essential ground-level information on the condition of the Pakistani population, has yet to be released. In general, there appears to be a lack of appetite, awareness and ability in Pakistan to analyse and utilise data especially among those making decisions regarding the employment, health, education and other essential needs of the country's 240 million citizens.

Data reflecting inequities among communities, districts and populations that are being 'left far behind', is, in fact, readily available. What is missing, however, is the will to

analyse the data, prove its veracity and take action accordingly. The Population Council's recent analysis of District-Level Vulnerabilities (based mainly on the PBS Pakistan Mouza Census 2020), shows that the distance to a basic health unit in rural Punjab is seven kilometres, 25km in Sindh, 15km in KP, and 51km in Balochistan. Similarly, the average distance to a girl's secondary school in Punjab is 8km compared to the much higher 38km in Balochistan.

Socioeconomic data is periodically collected by PBS, but barely used. The PBS website is the window to Pakistan's official figures on everything ranging from prices, numbers of animals and acreage of land to education, health, national accounts, etc. It should be making widely available development data on inequities across Pakistan, showing chunks of the population, especially in the districts of rural Balochistan, which are left very far behind.

There is one silver lining in District-Level Vulnerabilities in the area of communications — mobile density is almost 100 per

cent in Pakistan. Undoubtedly, an equaliser, mobile phones make it easier for families to connect with each other and the self-employed to connect with their clientele. Specifically, a large number of migrant families are able to remain regularly in touch with their relatives back home thanks to mobile phones. But, while we remain progressively interconnected through telecommunication, internet and social media, we are drifting apart as a nation, due to the wide disparity of living standards across the population.

We do not need data to recognise the inequality of lives across Pakistan; it is visible around us and just requires a bit of sensitivity and empathy to observe. It is palpable in the lived experience of countless people — a large proportion of whom live below the poverty line. We are surrounded by poverty, discrimination and injustice.

The country's elite need to take a break from their mundane chatter about politics, the heat, and inflation, and focus on the glaring divide between the rich and the poor. In this regard,

the poor treatment of domestic help stands out as a grave issue of concern. Often, these workers who provide household services face humiliation and even violence at work and at home.

Women's empowerment is a priority area of the SDGs and human rights in general. Still, women in Pakistan (with the exception of a privileged few) generally fall in the bottom rung of any socioeconomic metric; they lead a life fraught with difficulty. They are often malnourished and experience frequent and unwanted pregnancies, and have poor access to basic services, such as health and education. Above all, they are generally devoid of any agency to make decisions concerning themselves or their children, and struggle to make ends meet.

Children's rights and welfare is at the heart of the SDGs. In spite of that, a majority of children in Pakistan are denied even their basic rights. We continue to remain complacent about high levels of fertility when out of the 7m babies born each year, about half are either unwanted or mistimed,

and are likely to end up being born in poor households. The vast majority of these children are likely to be stunted and never go to school. Many would be lucky to survive their first birthday.

The poor are berated through remarks such as 'these people have too many children and do not look after their health'. Given the indifference to their plight, there may come a point when the poor are blamed for not wanting to get out of their state of poverty. This attitude is in divergence with the values of a just and humane society. A thread of hope in terms of providing basic needs to the millions being left behind would lie in our state leadership, elites and citizens groups waking up to the situation. A major jolt is required to disturb the prevailing complacency, apathy and lack of conscience that are preventing policies that direct resources towards access to health, education and safe drinking water for millions of Pakistanis. Without immediate course correction, Pakistan is headed towards default on its SDGs by 2030. -- Courtesy Dawn

Pressure building

Khurram Husain

There is no precedent in our history of such a long and intense spell of inflation gripping the country. It has never happened before. Pakistan has had bouts of high inflation, with the last one running roughly from early 2008 to 2010 or so, depending on which metrics you use to measure its rise and tapering off. But the most recent bout began in May 2021 and is continuing unabated, despite what the measurement of the Consumer Price Index might be showing.

That is three continuous years with no end in sight. Not only that, if the last peak that inflation saw was about 20pc, this bout has seen it touch a peak above 30pc. Not only is the present bout of inflation longer in duration than any in the past, it is also more intense.

We have a new situation on our hands, because there is no model, no projection and no way of knowing what such

prolonged exposure to such intense inflationary pressure can do to a populace. Already we are surrounded by anecdotes and stories told by those around us of electricity bills that are in excess of or equal to a household's monthly expenses. But wait till the month of August. That is when the new electricity bills will start arriving, and for those who live on a salary, the new tax deductions will be applied. The pressures on household purchasing power are set to intensify further.

How far will this process go? The state is balancing its books on our backs, yours and mine. It is shedding its deficits and offloading them onto us instead. This is what they call 'stabilisation' in the sterile language of economists. For the rest of us, it simply means a severe eroding of our standard of living.

Since 2008 onwards, Pakistan has been under a virtually continuous stabilisation programme. I say 'virtually continu-

ous' for a reason. There were a few years in between, from 2014 till 2017, and again from around 2021 till 2022, when a brief spurt of economic growth passed through our midst. None of those were real. They were fuelled by heavy borrowing, domestic and foreign, and both played a big role in creating the crash that followed.

I have written a lot about why this has been the case. For now, I want to draw your attention, dear reader, to this simple fact: Pakistan's populace has been subjected now to the longest and most intense bout of inflation that it has ever experienced in its history. And it isn't over yet.

The reason I want you to focus your mind on this is equally simple. We don't know where the breaking point lies, and we certainly don't know what happens when we hit that breaking point. A few countries offer some clues. Kenya, for example, saw the outbreak of large-scale rioting on the streets when the govern-

ment rolled out an IMF-mandated budget laden with taxes and withdrawals of vital subsidies required to keep food prices in check.

But riots need not be the only expression of popular anger and desperation. A rising tide of street crime usually accompanies rising urban unemployment coupled with inflation. But beyond these more traditional outlets for the growing desperation lies a danger zone that we can barely imagine.

Economists do not have the models to tell you what sustained exposure to intense economic desperation can do to a populace. The consequences need not come overnight, as in Kenya where riots broke out almost immediately following the announcement of the budget. The slow burn of inflation can bring changes that we are not equipped to measure or detect. The vote that needed to be suppressed so ruthlessly in February this year is perhaps one example. It is easy to see where

Miftah Ismail is coming from when he says the (real) outcome of the February election was actually driven by prolonged inflation.

But beyond protests and riots and petty crime and votes, the rising arc of desperation can also lead to conflict. People can turn on each other with bizarre justifications that don't seem to connect with their economic circumstances in any rational way. They can turn towards faith healers and other quacks, whether for health advice, or advice on 'get rich quick' rackets, or even political and religious advice. What can follow is a train of consequences that leads in strange directions: the growth of bubbles and pyramid schemes or the spread of bad medicine or rising cases of domestic violence or the growing incidence of lynching and looting and other violent mob behaviour.

The state can no longer rely only on its repressive apparatus to keep the consequences of

inflation in check. The personnel who staff this apparatus are themselves drawn from the general populace, and it is to the same general populace they return when they go home after performing their duties. Whatever happens to the people happens to them, unless the state tries to use its dwindling resource base to secure these personnel from the depredations of inflation. Doing so leaves less behind for others, and makes the situation worse by aggravating the inflationary fire rather than helping put it out. The inflation engulfing the country is no longer just an economic problem. It is a danger to the social order. It is not clear when a tipping point will be reached, nor what it will trigger if and when it does arrive. I do not know any longer who I am writing this for. Those in power cannot be reached, and even if they could, there is not much they can do about it anymore. For the rest of us, however, it is worth bearing in mind that power in Pakistan is losing its grip.

More than change

F.S. Aijazuddin

President Joe Biden insists that he is still running. He has not said in which direction. He needs to decide quickly before someone makes up his mind for him. Some expect the Democratic Party to push him over the edge. Others that his medical team will advise him against subjecting himself to the rigour of a gruelling election campaign. The only person he will listen to is his wife Jill Biden.

It will not be the first time that a spouse has had the last word. In November 1990, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, locked in a leadership contest within her Conservative Party, survived the first ballot. She would have taken the fight into a second ballot — 'to fight on and fight to win' — had her husband Denis Thatcher not persuaded her to quit. He gave her this pithy advice: "Don't go on, love."

In Great Britain's recent general election, the British voters themselves, rather than a furtive cabal of Conservative bigwigs, were invited to decide on the future of PM Rishi Sunak and the party. The results — unequivocal but not unexpected — sent Rishi and the Conservative Party packing.

His successor as PM is Labour's Sir Keir Starmer who won by a landslide. No one can predict how long he will last. It seems the only permanent resident of 10 Downing Street is the photogenic tabby cat which poses artfully on its doorstep.

In the UK, the transfer of power is like the passing of an Egyptian pharaoh, interred with meticulous ceremony and a treasure of memories.

In US politics, a presidential election is not a contest of ideologies. It is a clash of personalities: for example, the winsome John F. Kennedy vs Rich-

ard Nixon with a five o'clock shadow; the dynamic Bill Clinton vs Bob Dole; the underdog Barack Obama vs Mitt Romney; the brash Donald Trump vs Hilary Clinton, and then the corrective Joe Biden vs Donald Trump.

Should a US president retire prematurely through death (Franklin D. Roosevelt) or resignation (Nixon), the automatic replacement is the incumbent vice president. Harry Truman replaced Roosevelt; Gerald Ford succeeded Nixon. It is said that during George H.W. Bush's presidency, though, the Secret Service had been instructed that if the president was ever in mortal danger, VP Dan Quayle should be shot first.

If Biden does stumble into premature retirement, his successor would be his Vice President Kamala Harris. She would by default become the US's first female off-white president.

Kamala Harris, like Rishi Sunak, comes from immigrant stock. As did Baroness Saveeda Warsi (chairwoman of the Conservative Party, 2010-12). Warsi, the first Muslim to serve as a cabinet minister, held two posts: minister of state for the foreign and commonwealth office and simultaneously for faith and communities. She resigned in August 2014, after disagreeing with PM David Cameron's policy relating to the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Ten years later, that Israeli-Gaza conflict is continuing, unresolved. However, her then lone voice has gathered strength. In the new UK parliament, there are 89 MPs from ethnic minority backgrounds, among them 26 Muslim MPs who have made their position on the Gaza conflict clear.

By comparison, in India's current Lok Sabha, there are only 24 Muslim MPs. Con-gress has seven; Modi's ruling BJP

none. Some BJP cynics have questioned how many true Muslims Pakistan has in its parliament.

Interestingly, in the UK and in India, future policies will be influenced less by ideologies than by changing demographics. The Rev Martin Luther King's dream that humans should "not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character" is being fulfilled gradually. Ask Barack Obama. Ask Mi-c-hael Jackson. Ask Meg-han Markle. But in a rainbow world, colour will continue to matter.

This year 2024 will be known as that of general elections. One quarter of the world's population across 97 countries is eligible to vote. They include eight of the most populous — Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Indo-nesia, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and the US.

Their voters will inevitably have significant, differing expectations of their governments. Over the next four to five years, they want to see not just the change promised during the electoral hustings but a discernible improvement in governance, resource distribution, climate change, etc.

Governments might like to follow these five simplified commandments: Thou shalt not kill (the US); Thou shalt not commit adultery (Donald Trump); Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods (Netanyahu); Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour (the Western media); and Thou shalt not steal (Pakistani politicians).

But then leaders are neither saints nor miracle workers. To them, any accountability is best postponed until the time of the next general election or their political death, whichever comes first. -- Courtesy Dawn

Climate diplomacy

Aisha Khan

Climate change is now globally recognised as an existential threat to the planet and all life systems. Diplomacy has been used as a tool for centuries to address geopolitical issues and resolve contentious matters through negotiated agreements.

In today's world and the current global scenario, the overarching threat of climate change makes climate and diplomacy inseparable. The use of one to step up action in the other has played a critical role in moving the needle on climate change from its inception at the Earth Summit in Rio (1992) to the Paris Agreement (2015) that finally succeeded in getting 196 countries to agree on an 'Agenda of Solutions'.

As we move forward into uncharted territory, it is more important than ever before to forge mutually beneficial alliances to preserve nature and invest in sustainable development so that people and nature can thrive in tandem. To this end, the Conference of Parties is held annually to reach agreement on contentious issues within the Paris Agreement on the way forward. Diplomacy is in full swing at these meetings and country delegates from their respective foreign offices play an important role at these multilateral dialogues.

However, while recognising the necessity of multilateralism, it is equally important to acknowledge the need for strengthening bilateral cooperation that can promote dialogue and confidence, thereby contributing to regional stability. Cooperative and coordinated mechanisms are an investment in future peace and crisis management between and among

countries that live in close proximity and are connected by land, air and water. The benefits of an integrated approach include reducing future risks, improving productivity of resources and people, boosting innovation by seeking solutions to new challenges, increasing environmental benefits and improving ecosystems.

South Asia is a complex and dynamic ecosystem with climate hot spots, high mountains, large glaciated areas and a vast coastal belt. It is also the least integrated region in the world with a population of approximately two billion and a large youth cohort. The geography and topography of the region makes each country an upper or lower riparian that derives its waters from the same mountain source. The type of climate-induced disasters and the coping capacity of people also have similarities that go beyond economic indicators to sharing social norms and traditional practices, especially with regard to gender, access and opportunity.

Air pollution is a transboundary issue and a common concern that is rapidly eroding the environmental integrity of urban centres and putting glaciated areas under threat causing damage to human health and accelerating the melting of glaciers. All of the above make a compelling case for collaboration.

Under a rapidly warming world with high humanitarian stakes, it is time for countries in South Asia to prioritise policies based on the urgency of the crisis and plan accordingly. Climate diplomacy is the best tool for re-evaluating and recalibrating relationship dynamics taking into account the scope of the climate threat, its impact on

communities and the capacity of states to manage it on a stand-alone basis. Given the interconnectedness of the landmass, climate impacts will have a spill-over effect making the future risky at best and hazardous at worst.

The recent climate stocktake in Dubai and the post-election scenario in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India present the region with a new opportunity to explore the potential of developing a regional climate vision strategy that offers practical cooperative solutions for safeguarding the natural resources of South Asia and protecting human life.

Given the truncated and traumatic history of the region, this may not be easy but using climate as an entry point and diplomacy as a tool can open windows for constructive conversations.

The courts in Pakistan and India have recognised climate change as a human rights issue and justified this rights-based approach by linking the state's obligation to take precautionary measures to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. This shift in constitutionalising climate change offers a unique opportunity to both countries to address the challenge jointly and use it to deliver on an agenda that is seen not only as an exogenous threat but as a core legal and ethical responsibility of the state towards its citizens. Cooperation and collaboration on approaches that support sustainable development, protect the rights of people and nature, ensure that decisions on climate change are equitable and develop better understanding of the problem and solutions to environmental issues can only be a win for all. -- Courtesy Dawn

PM stresses using technology for effective enforcement of customs duties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday emphasized the importance of taking comprehensive measures to eliminate corruption in customs operations. He stressed the need to remove unnecessary hurdles and utilize modern technology, including artificial intelligence and advanced equipment, to ensure the full enforcement of customs duties.

Chairing a meeting focused on the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Pakistan Customs, the prime minister described the customs sector as the backbone of the country's economy. He stated that reforms within the FBR and complete digitization would secure economic stability.

Prime Minister Shehbaz instructed the relevant authorities to ensure a third-party audit of reform initiatives in the FBR and other departments, consolidating all such projects under a single framework.

He directed efforts to increase revenue collection through enhanced enforcement measures and called for the establishment of a project management unit dedicated to reforms in the customs sector. Addressing issues related to mis-invoicing, he stressed the need to resolve these problems and eliminate under-invoicing to protect Pakistan's

industries and products. He also requested detailed reports on revenue collection resulting from enforcement actions and called for the establishment of a regulatory framework for the operations of the shipping industry.

The prime minister emphasized the need for a third-party audit of the web-based one-customs system (WeBOC). During the briefing on customs operations, it was reported that Pakistan Customs



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the Federal Board of Revenue.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing the Advisory Committee Meeting on Release of International Mobile Telephony (IMT) Spectrum for Next-Generation Mobile Broadband Services in Pakistan.

Govt committed to boost cotton production: Tanveer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries, Production and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday reiterated the government's commitment to promote the cotton industry. He said this while addressing the meeting of the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee's governing body, said a news release.

which will significantly alleviate its financial burdens and alleviate its difficulties to a great extent," he added. He said that research and development must be prioritized, and the government is committed to providing comprehensive support to farmers, ginners, and all relevant stakeholders.

The minister said the country's annual cotton production currently stands at 8.4 million bales, aiming to increase 15 million bales by 2025. The yield per acre can be increased with modern agricultural practices and technology.

The minister stressed that Pakistan's economy heavily relies on cotton production and textile industry growth is linked to good cotton yields. "The textile industry has been granted Rs 10 per unit subsidy on electricity,

Speakers highlight potential, challenges in IT, Telecom sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers at a public-private dialogue on Wednesday called for strategic collaborations and rationalized spectrum and licensing mechanisms to address challenges and unlock potential in the Information Technology (IT) and Telecommunication sector.

The dialogue, organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)'s study group on IT and Telecommunication, focused on the state of competition in the telecom sector and ways to promote it. Brig Muhammad Yasin Senior Advisor

Emeritus at SDPI, highlighted the critical role of the telecom sector as the backbone of the country's economy, impacting education, health, industry, defence, and agriculture. He emphasized the need for a robust and competitive environment, meaningful regulations, and collaborations among service providers to foster sector development. He also noted that infrastructure sharing among telecom operators could reduce business costs and improve service delivery, especially in rural areas where competition has dwindled the number of internet service providers from six to three.



MULTAN: Students visiting different stalls during the Tech Expo 2024 organized by the Institute of Computer Science and Information Technology at the Jinnah Hall.

WUM hosts TECHExpo on modern advancement

MULTAN (APP): Students of 10 universities of exhibited their projects at one-day TechExpo, hosted by WUM Institute of CS & IT on modern advancements which included several educational and technological advancements.

This expo and poster exhibition was the first of its kind at WUM featuring different modules in disciplines such as computer science, engineering, applied sciences, AI intelligence, and healthcare. A total of 38 projects were displayed showcasing a broad spectrum of academic and practical skills. A Poster competition was also

organized by final-year students from different universities. The expo attracted participants from 10 universities, which made it an gathering of academic minds. Students from the BZU, Emerson, Air Universities, NCBA, Times, MNSUA, NUML, NFC and Education University.

This diversity of participation enriched the event, fostering a spirit of academic exchange and collaboration. Women University Multan (WUM) Dr Kalsoom Pracha stressed upon the importance of technological and academic advancement in today's world while speaking at the event.

Advisory Committee discusses release of IMT Spectrum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday chaired the meeting of Advisory Committee on Release of International Mobile Telephony (IMT) Spectrum for Improvement of Next Generation Mobile Broadband Services in Pakistan.

allocation and utilization of the IMT spectrum. It was mentioned that the release of this spectrum is expected to significantly improve connectivity, enhance Internet speeds, and meet the increasing demand for high-quality data services.

The auction process, technical specifications and the time-line for the spectrum release were discussed in the meeting. The Advisory Committee also considered the way forward to promote technological advancements and create an environment conducive to investment and growth in the telecommunications sector.

This meeting underscores the government's commitment to advancing digital infrastructure and supporting the country's economic growth.

The key stakeholders from the telecommunication sector and regulatory authorities briefed the minister on strategic plans for the

OGRA organizes seminar on "Safe Use of LPG, 'Zero' Fatal Accident"

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) here on Thursday organized a national seminar on "Safe Use of LPG - 'Zero' Fatal Accident" to address the need for enhanced safety measures in the use of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

Chairman OGRA Masroor Khan along with Member Oil, Member Finance and the senior team from OGRA's LPG and Enforcement Departments, were also present on the occasion.

Masroor Khan said that the increasing use of LPG across the country, from urban centers to remote villages demanded urgent need for robust safety protocols. He said that the seminar aimed to address these safety concerns by bringing together industry leaders, policymakers.

The seminar was attended by senior officials from the Petroleum Division, Islamabad Police, Motorways Police, Civil Defense and CEOs of leading LPG sector companies. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, were Rs 279.50 and Rs 281.25 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 72 paise to close at Rs 302.01 against the last day's closing of Rs 301.29, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.72, whereas an increase of Rs 2.17 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 358.57 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 356.40.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal also increased by 03 each to close at Rs 75.85 and Rs 74.28 respectively.

Indonesia to promote industry, trade, tourism with Pakistan

PESHAWAR (APP): Indonesian Charge d Affaires, Rahmat Hindiatra, and Economic Attache, Axelsyah R Miraza has expressed the desire to promote industry and trade, as well as youth and cultural tourism, with Pakistan, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Both sides expressed satisfaction over the prospect of enhancing trade, industry, and youth and cultural tourism to foster closer ties and pave the way for economic stability. The Indonesian delegation invited former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, Adnan Jalil, and other participants to visit Indonesia, an invitation that was warmly appreciated by the hosts.

Rahmat Hindiatra, and Economic Attache Axelsyah R Miraza praised the hardworking and dedicated people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and expressed eagerness to collaborate with them. They emphasized the need for both countries to exchange experiences in industry and trade to strengthen and expand their commercial relations.

The meeting involved a thorough discussion of the successful sectors in

Govt making concerted efforts to reduce electricity prices: Awais Leghari

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari has apprised the National Assembly Standing Committee on Energy (Power Division) that the Power Division is making concerted efforts to reduce the price of electricity by intensifying anti-theft campaigns and reducing line losses.

The committee which met with Muhammad Idriss in the Chair and was attended by MNAs; Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Raja Qamer ul Islam,

Chaudhry Naseer Ahmed Abbas, Rana Muhammad Hayat Khan, Khurshid Ahmed Junejo, Syed Waseem Hussain, Junaid Akbar, Malik Anwar Taj, Sher Ali Arbab, Haji Imtiaz Ahmed Chaudhry and Ali Afzal Sahi, Muhammad Iqbal Khan. The senior officers from Ministry of Energy (Power Division) and its attached departments also attended the meeting. The Secretary, Ministry of Energy (Power Division) briefed the Committee on working and performance of the Ministry and its attached departments.

The Secretary informed that the Power Division dealt with the matters relating to development of power resources of the country, electric utilities, liaison with international engineering organization in power sector, federal agencies and institutions for promotion of special studies in power sector etc. He further apprised that the Ministry had plans for development of large scale alternative renewable energy (ARE) projects including hydro power projects.

PSX gains 150 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday gained 150.80 points, a positive change of 0.19 percent, closing at 79,992.35 points against 79,841.56 points on the last working day.

A total of 389,024,310 shares were traded during the day as compared to 495,910,236 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 20,924 billion against Rs 22,116 billion on the last trading day.

Around 445 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 181 of them recorded gains and 212 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 52 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Agritech Limited with 22,041,367 shares at Rs 24.24 per share, Hub Power Company with 18,624,585 shares at Rs 163.75 per share.

The National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1.742 trillion for the year 2023-24, it is encouraging that 100 percent of the target has been achieved, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Thursday.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the fiscal year 2022-23, he said.

He said this was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

CDNS accomplish Rs 1.742 trillion targets in fresh bond in FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has realized a target of Rs 1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and 100 percent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from July 1 to June 30.

The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country, he said. Given the current market trend in the country the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added.

VP FPCCI, Aman Paracha, stated the

FPCCI stresses on FTA with Indonesia to enhance, diversify bilateral trade

Independent Report KARACHI: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Thursday, emphasized the need of entering into a free trade agreement with Indonesia to enhance and diversify bilateral trade while rectifying trade imbalances.

President FPCCI, Atif Ikram Sheikh, in a statement, stressed that Pakistan needed to work with Indonesia to formulate a free trade agreement

Pakistan in the Southeast Asia region," he suggested. Senior Vice President FPCCI, Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, said that ASEAN countries can be a huge export market for Pakistan as it has a population of over 600 million with a very strong middle-class. Their collective GDP in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) has well surpassed \$10 trillion, he added.

He said that PSC was organizing training of seed dealers to benefit farmers so that they can start availing the facility soon after they receive their Kissan card.

He said that PSC was organizing training of seed dealers to benefit farmers so that they can start availing the facility soon after they receive their Kissan card.

importance of diversifying imports from Indonesia beyond palm oil and exploring opportunities for Pakistani exports in diverse sectors. He announced FPCCI's plans to organize single-country exhibition in Indonesia.

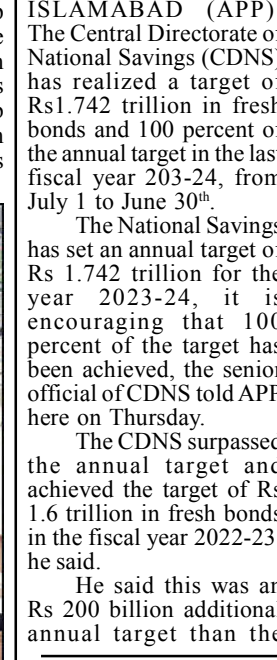


LAHORE: People are buying used items from a roadside vendor at Shadman area in the Provincial Capital.



SIALKOT: Assistant Commissioner Miss Anam and Chairperson of Women's Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Maryam Nauman addressing a seminar "No to Plastic campaign" on the initiative of Chief Minister Punjab organized by WCCIS.

FPCCI stresses on FTA with Indonesia to enhance, diversify bilateral trade



(FTA) in order to rectify bilateral trade deficit of up to \$3 billion. "We should work on Brand Pakistan through single-country exhibitions; exchange of trade delegations; cultural & trade exchanges and projecting soft-image of

Pakistan, Germany share rich history of diplomatic relations: Senate Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Thursday said that Pakistan and Germany share rich history of diplomatic relations founded in mutual trust, cooperation and a commitment to global peace and development.

"Germany is a valuable partner of Pakistan bilaterally and in the EU context and we are keen to further strengthen this partnership" he expressed these views in a meeting with a three member German parliamentary delegation led by Michael Muller, MP, German Bundestag.

The Chairman Senate specially mentioned the high level contacts and said that Pakistan desires to promote more interactions at all levels, said a news release.

He also underscored the need to promote parliamentary exchanges between the two countries and said that high level political contacts help bring people closer.

He informed that the Senate of Pakistan was working on establishing friendship groups to promote people to people contacts for better understanding.

While appreciating the development cooperation, he expressed the desire to continue efforts for tackling climate change related challenge.



BEIJING: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Mr. Khalil Hashmi and Former Ambassador to China Naghmana Hashmi at welcome banquet hosted for dignitaries attending the high-level forum on the Action Plan for Global Development and a Shared Future organised by CIDCA.

DG BFA describes licenses essential for food business, directs concerned to ensure implementation

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Director General of Balochistan Food Authority (BFA) Attiqullah Khan has stated that acquisition of food business license is essential for the related business.

He said that the presence of food business license guarantees the business to be according to the law.

The DG directed to the people associated with the food business to get the licenses on priority basis and renew the existing licenses, otherwise they should be ready to face legal action.

The DG was presiding over the meeting about the initiatives of BFA at its headquarter on Thursday.

The matters about crackdown of teams in districts, overall performance of the operation and licensing wing and issuance of licenses of the food business licensing were discussed and reviewed in detail.

Directors, Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors of different departments participated in the meeting through video link.

Addressing the meeting, DG BFA directed to the Operation Wing to expedite activities against those doing food business without licenses.

He also directed to keep strict vigil on the outlets established at the main highways in order to ensure quality food to the passengers.

He also directed to accelerate action to stop supply of poor quality food to the people.

Jirga of Sanarzai tribe held in view of tribal enmity in Ziarat

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Sanarzai tribe held a tribal jirga in Killi Chawatra of Ziarat the other day.

The jirga was held in view of the existing tribal enmity in the area.

The tribal elders as well as religious leaders and youngsters belonging to the Sanarzai tribe participated in the jirga.

After long discussion, it was decided to form 25-member committee which would prepare future course of action.



QUETTA: Balochistan Secretary Health, Saleh Baloch in meeting with delegation Rotary International led by the central leader of Aziz Memon.

Commissioner Kalat directs to ensure foolproof security during Muharram in Hub

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Commissioner Kalat Division, Muhammad Naem Bazai has directed to the concerned high ups to ensure foolproof security during Muharramul Haram in Hub.

He said that foolproof security would be ensured to the Muharram processions and gatherings in the industrial city.

The Commissioner Kalat was presiding over meeting about security arrangements in Hub on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Inspector General of Police, Kalat Range, Munir Sheikh, Deputy Commissioner Hub, Rohana Gul Kakar, SP Hub, Maroof Usman, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Ali Raza Khosa, AC Hub, Muhammad Ali Durrani, AC Windar, Muhammad Hamza and other concerned officials.

During the meeting, security plan was discussed about security arrangements in Hub.

It was informed that comprehensive strategy has been prepared for security of Muharram processions and gatherings (majalis).

Addressing the meeting, Commissioner Kalat announced that there would be no permission to take out procession and hold gatherings except the approved routes and venues.

DIG Police said that personnels would be deployed according to the number of processionists.

He said that the special branch, traffic police and other field formations would perform their duties during Muharramul Haram.

The Commissioner and DIG Police directed to ensure implementation of the security SOPs as already devised by the Home department.

Besides, there would also be strict vigil on the movement of people included in the fourth schedule during Muharram.



ISLAMABAD: President of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Pakistan H.E. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses the signing of MoUs and Agreements in various sectors between Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan sign 15 agreements, MoUs to enhance bilateral cooperation in diverse fields

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Azerbaijan on Thursday signed 15 Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) and agreements to promote bilateral cooperation in a range of fields including trade, commerce, tourism, mines & minerals, science technology, law & justice and cultural exchange programs.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev witnessed the signing ceremony held here at the PM House.

Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Azerbaijan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Samir Sharifov signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan on Consular Affairs. Preferential Trade Agreement between the government of Azerbaijan and the government of Pakistan was signed by Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Deputy Minister of Economy Azerbaijan Sahib Mammadov.

Similarly, an MoU on the cooperation between the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Privatization of Pakistan in the field of privatization of state property was signed by Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan and Deputy Minister of Economy Azerbaijan Sahib Mammadov. Another agreement on Transit Trade between the governments of Azerbaijan and Pakistan was also signed between the two countries. The two sides also agreed on a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan and Minister of Law and Justice of Pakistan. The MoC was signed by Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar and Azerbaijan Minister for Defence Industry.

Youth kills stepmother, sister over domestic disputes

PANJGUR (INP): A pitiless youth gunned down his stepmother and sister over domestic disputes here on Thursday, police said.

According to detail, the incident took place in Sarkoran Paire Jhalag area of district Panjur of Balochistan where an accused identified as Hayat opened fire at stepmother and step-sister after exchange of hot words over domestic issues.

As a result of firing, both mother and sister died on the spot and culprit fled the scene after committing dual murder.

The bodies were shifted to hospital for post-mortem and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprit.

DC Sibi chairs meeting on Solarization of tubewells

Independent Report
SIBI: A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Sibi, Jahanzeb Sheikh, to discuss the solarization of tubewells in the district. The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Sibi, Jarallah Khan, Assistant Commissioner Lehri, Liyakat Jatoi, Deputy Director Agriculture Extension, Ghulam Mustafa, Deputy Director Agricultural Statistics, Ifthar Rind, SDO KESCO, Amir Hamza, and others.

Khuzdar police meet with citizens action body

Independent Report
KHUZDAR: SSP Abdul Aziz Jakhani met with the new cabinet and council members of the All Parties Citizens Action Committee at the Municipal Rest House. The meeting aimed to discuss key issues and congratulate the newly elected officials. The attendees included committee members and police officers. The agenda focused on: Enhancing the traffic system, Combating drug abuse, Prohibiting aerial firing at celebrations, Taking action against nighttime troublemakers and groups, Banning the display of weapons

Tehsildar injured in Turbat firing

TURBAT (APP): Tehsildar of Turbat area was injured in a firing incident that occurred in Turbat, an area of Balochistan province, tv channels quoting police reported on Thursday evening. According to details, Tehsildar Shairjan was walking outside when unidentified persons opened fire. As a result, Tehsildar Turbat received bullet injuries.

Rapidly increasing population creating numerous problems in country, says Minister

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development, Bakht Muhammad Kakar has noted with concern that our country has become fifth most populous country in the world. There's no denying the fact that rapidly increasing population is creating numerous issues in the country including shortage of food, lack of accommodation, education and health facilities besides other basic amenities which otherwise are essential.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, the Provincial Minister referred to a recent report which mentioned that the population of world has increased to 8 billion. And if the population of world continued to increase with this proportion, then 2 to 4 billion people would be increased on globe in next 50 years.

He said that every possible steps are being taken by the provincial government to expand the circle of facilities of public healthcare and reproductive health at the grassroots level, adding he stressed.

He said that it is necessary to highlight the trends of increasing population in urban as well as remote areas of the province.



QUETTA: MPA Maulvi Noorullah meeting with Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoaib Noshervani.

Commissioner urges scholars to play role for ending polio disease

QUETTA (APP): Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafaqat urged the scholars, stakeholders and civil society members to play their role for the elimination of polio disease in order to save future of new generation.

He expressed these views on Thursday while addressing at a ceremony organized under the auspices of Rotary International regarding the role of scholars in the eradication of polio. Addressing at the ceremony, Commissioner Quetta Hamza Shafaqat said that the polio was such a deadly disease that if a child was infected once it becomes disabled for life.

He said that India, a country with a population of one and a half billion has eradicated polio disease in five years adding that many countries including Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia.

DC chairs meeting to discuss payment of compensation

Independent Report
JHAL MAGSI: A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Jhal Magasi, Syed Rahmatullah Shah, to discuss the payment of compensation to landowners and resolve other issues related to the OGDCL project in Jhal Magasi.

The meeting was attended by various officials, including Assistant Commissioner Jhal Magasi Faisal Shah Rashdi, SP Jhal Magasi Subhan Ali Magasi, Tehsildar Gandawah Hadi Bakhsh Phoro, Tehsildar Jhal Magasi Arbab Khan Magasi, and Regional Coordinator (OGDCL) Akramullah Kasi, among others.

During the meeting, effective strategies were discussed to address the installation of gas pipelines, compensation for landowners, and other issues related to the OGDCL project in Jhal Magasi.



QUETTA: Inspector General Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh handed over these sized vehicles to the Chief Collector of Customs Balochistan Muhammad Yaqoob Mako during various operations by Quetta Police and Traffic Police.

All IMF conditions already met, Pakistan eyes \$6b bailout program: FM Aurangzeb

Says consultations with provinces on about tax on agricultural income

ISLAMABAD (INP): Finance Minister Aurangzeb has said that Pakistan wanted to get \$6 billion bailout package from the IMF as Islamabad has already met all IMF conditions.

Talking to media after attending a meeting of National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance, the Finance Minister said new loan program will be finalized this month.

He said climate change issues will also be discussed after the first review mission of the new loan program. The Finance Minister said climate financing funding was not being negotiated in current negotiations with IMF.

He said progress has also been made on improving income tax collections on agriculture and the consultations with provinces regarding agricultural income tax were underway.

Earlier, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance meeting was held under the chair of MNA Syed Naveed Qamar to review the performance of the Finance Ministry.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb gave a briefing to the committee about the government's various initiatives to boost economic recovery.

Finance Minister Aurangzeb told the participants that all economic indicators remained positive during the last financial year 2023-2024 and foreign exchange reserves touched over 9 billion dollars while the inflation rate also declined gradually.

He said currency remained unstable due to a delay in IMF bailout program in 2023 but after the agreement, economic conditions improved, profits and dividends of foreign companies were being paid.

The Finance Minister claimed that due to the IMF program, the government was getting funds from other institutions. He said now World Bank has approved funding of 1 billion dollars for the Dasu Dam.

Aurangzeb claimed that nothing was being controlled artificially by the government, adding that there are no restrictions on imports and the assumptions about the value of the dollar were a thing of the past.

He said the value of the dollar will remain stable and the assumptions that the dollar will cross 400 were over. The Finance Minister said builders and developers were being taxed and the registration of retailers has started.

Aurangzeb said all four provincial ministers have agreed to agricultural income tax.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with German Parliamentary delegation headed by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) at Parliament House.

Naqvi visits Karachi, meets Dawoodi Bohra community leaders

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visited Karachi and met with Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, the leader of the Dawoodi Bohra community, at the Burhani Palace.

He also visited the Shah Shaheedan Imam Bargah in Soldier Bazaar and reviewed the arrangements.

During the meeting with Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, his son Shahzada Hussain Burhanuddin was also present.

Interior Minister expressed good wishes for Saifuddin saying, "We welcome you to Pakistan with an open heart.

Your arrival is an honor for us. We have a relationship of respect and admiration with you, which will always remain the same."

He added that the Dawoodi Bohra community is a peaceful and loving community.

MPA Maulana Hidayat elected as Chairman of Standing Committee for Fisheries, Food

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Member Provincial Assembly and Head of Haq Do Tehreek, Maulana Hidayatur Rehman was elected as the Chairman, Standing Committee of Balochistan Assembly for Fisheries, Food, Agriculture, Livestock, Dairy Development and Cooperative Society, here on Thursday. The election of Maulana Hidayatur Rehman as Chairman of the Standing Committee was held in its meeting at the Provincial Assembly with its members in attendance.

The members of Standing Committee unanimously elected as its chairman.

It may be mentioned here that chairmen of different Standing Committees of the provincial assembly have already been elected by their respective members.

The members of Provincial Assembly Fazal Qadir Mandokhail, Syed Zafar Ali Agha and Mir Ghulam Dastagir Badini were elected as Chairman of different standing committees of provincial Assembly on Wednesday.

The Standing Committee on Social Welfare, Women's Development, Zakat, Ushr, Hajj, and Auqaf Affairs met with its members in the attendance.

The members elected Qadir Mandokhail as Chairman of the standing committee. Similarly, the Standing Committee on Law, Parliamentary Affairs, Prosecution, and Human Rights held its meeting in the Provincial Assembly, electing Syed Zafar Ali Agha as Chairman while the Standing Committee on Industry, Labour, and Mineral Development held its meeting in the Provincial Assembly, electing Mir Ghulam Dastagir Badini as Chairman.



QUETTA: Commissioner and Administrator Hamza Shafaqat addresses during Ulema Workshop on Role of Ulema in Polio Eradication organized by Pakistan Polio Ulema Committee, held at Quetta press club.

Mir Jan Bugti terms missing persons issue a conspiracy against state

Independent Report
QUETTA: Tribal and political leader Mir Jan Muhammad Bugti has stated that while the issue of missing persons exists, many facts remain hidden. He expressed that protest is a democratic right, but using it as a cover for damaging public property and harming citizens is unacceptable. Bugti remarked that individuals who have gone into self-exile are also being counted among the missing persons. He alleged that some missing persons have been found involved in terrorist activities. Bugti claimed that external agencies are being pursued under the pretext of missing persons, and conspiracies are being hatched to spread chaos in the country. He noted that anti-state slogans during protests reveal the true intentions of the conspirators.

Balochistan Government initiates solarization of tube wells in Kharan district

KHARAN (APP): A high-level meeting chaired by Deputy Commissioner Munir Ahmad Soomro was held in Kharan on Thursday to discuss the conversion of electric tube wells to solar power, as part of the Balochistan government's initiative to promote renewable energy.

The meeting was attended by officials from WAPDA, agriculture, police, and revenue departments, as well as representatives of the Landlord Action Committee.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner directed WAPDA to compile a list of legal tube wells and submit it to the DC office within a week.

Landowners were urged to cooperate with WAPDA in providing necessary documents, including identity cards, electricity bills, bank account numbers, and connection details.