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dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

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Federal cabinet defers decision on PTI ban, Article 6 on Imran PTI's new tactics to malign armed forces won't be tolerated, vows PM

Malicious campaign run against COAS Gen Asim Munir from official website of the PTI; TTP's Afghan-based terror attacks unacceptable; Federal cabinet renews support for Palestinians, calls for war crimes proceedings against Israel; Visa-free entry approved for investors, entrepreneurs, residents from 126 countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday denounced the terror attacks in Pakistan involving Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) using Afghan soil saying that was "unacceptable" as Pakistan was fully prepared to protect its citizens but desired to resolve the matter peacefully.

The prime minister, in his remarks at the meeting of the federal cabinet chaired by him, pointed out the surge in terror incidents, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan causing the killing of the personnel of the army, police and civil armed forces.

He called the terrorism wave a machination against Pakistan as it was taking place at a time when the coalition government was making efforts for the country's development as it reached a Staff Level Agreement with IMF despite challenges and announced a three-month relief package for 96% of domestic power consumers.

Highlighting the role of Afghanistan in the surge of terrorism, the prime minister said the government was in interaction with them as Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif also visited there.

"But how is it possible that we hosted millions of



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

their people here without any complaint? We treated them like our brothers and never considered them as a burden. But we were rewarded in the form of TTP attacks on our citizens to mar the country's peace and business. This is not acceptable," he remarked.

He said Pakistan was ready to face any kind of situation as its valiant armed forces had sacrificed their lives to safeguard the country and its people.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also highlighted that the perpetrators of the May 9 riots, who had also attacked parliament, PTV

and besieged the PM House in the past, had resorted to new tactics to malign the country and its armed forces as a malicious campaign was run against Army Chief General Asim Munir from the official website of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

"We will not tolerate any such steps against the country, its innocent people, and armed forces," he said and called for national unity to protect the national interest.

The prime minister apprised the members of a decision to abolish the visa fees for 126 countries as a "quantum jump" to bring

ease of doing business and attract businessmen, tourists and travelers to Pakistan.

The decision, made after a threadbare discussion, would be tabled before the cabinet for its consideration, he added.

He said the deficiency of the visa fees would be made up by foreign exchange earned through investment and tourism, including religious tourism of which Pakistan has immense potential.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the visitors would get visas within 24 hours through the electronic travel authorization

form. Besides, the E-gates would be established at Gwadar Port and nine airports - initially in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports.

The prime minister strongly condemned the unprecedented human rights abuses of Israel against Palestinians as around 40,000 Palestinians had been killed including thousands of children and women.

He said despite the resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council and UN General Assembly and the decision by the International Court of Justice, Israel was

unbuded from its oppression which was highly condemnable.

The prime minister drew attention to the attacks on Pakistan's missions in Germany and London. He said the Foreign Office had timely taken up the matter and that the envoys of the countries concerned should be given demarches to seek the protection of Pakistan's missions.

Meanwhile the federal cabinet in a meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in the chair, on Wednesday, adopted a resolution reiterating support for the Palestinians, condemning Israel acts of barbarity and called for initiation of war crimes proceedings.

Addressing the meeting, the prime minister said Israel's continuing barbaric acts in Palestine had been unprecedented in the human history as it was targeting the innocent citizens including children and women in Gaza and rest of other Palestinian areas.

The prime minister said that during Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and SCO plus summits in Astana, he had raised a strong voice for the rights of the oppressed people of Palestine.

President Biden requests \$101 m in aid for Pakistan aims to support democracy

WASHINGTON (INP): US President Joe Biden has requested \$101 million in aid for Pakistan.

According to the report, the announcement was made by Donald Lu, the US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, during a briefing to the House of Representatives Committee on Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Donald Lu emphasized that the aid request aims to support democracy and human rights in Pakistan.

He said the pro-

posed assistance will also aid Pakistan in its fight against terrorism, economic reforms, and debt relief, helping to stabilise the country's economy.

In the same briefing, Donald Lu expressed concern over the situation in Afghanistan, particularly regarding the rights of women and minority groups.

He stated that normalising relations with the Taliban government is contingent on their respect for these rights and the release of all American citizens.



ISLAMABAD: Member Parliament from Opposition benches stage hunger strike camp outside Parliament House in the Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Dr. Musadik Malik held a meeting with the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Mr. Rashid Meredov.

Pakistan, Turkmenistan agree to expedite TAPI pipeline project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Turkmenistan have agreed to expedite the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, affirming their resolve for continuous engagement.

This agreement was reached during a meeting on Wednesday between Pakistan's Federal Minister for Petroleum, Dr Musadik Malik, and Turkmenistan's Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rashid Meredov, who is on a two-day visit to Pakistan.

The Turkmen delegation accompanying Rashid Meredov included Ata Haljanov, head of the International Economic Cooperation Division at Turkmenistan's Ministry

of Foreign Affairs; Eziz Nazarov, head of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Muhammetmyrat Amanov, Chairman of the Board and CEO of TAPI Pipeline Company Ltd; Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan; and Eldar Permanov, Third Secretary of the Embassy of Turkmenistan. Pakistani officials present at the meeting included Additional Secretary Hasan Yousafzai, Joint Secretary Shahbaz Tahir, and MD of Interstate Gas Systems Limited, Nadeem Bajwa.

Dr Musadik Malik welcomed the Turkmen delegation and expressed his gratitude for the hospitality offered by the Turkmen side during his last visit to

Turkmenistan. He said the visit of the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan marks a significant milestone in the strengthening of diplomatic and economic ties between the two nations.

TAPI pipeline project, the minister said, will lower energy costs, which can boost industrial growth, create jobs, and foster economic development. Reliable and affordable energy supplies are vital for industrial sectors and overall economic stability, he added.

This project, he said, aimed at fostering economic integration and energy security, has witnessed substantial progress through collaborative efforts and resolved continuous engagement among both countries.

Justice Minallah expresses desire for open courts during martial law threats

Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK: Justice Athar Minallah of the Supreme Court of Pakistan has expressed his desire for courts to remain open whenever there is a threat of martial law in the country. Speaking at the New York City Bar in New York, he said, "I want the courts to be open whenever there is a danger of martial law."

Justice Minallah criticised certain television channels for creating an environment suggestive of imminent martial law in Pakistan, although he refrained from naming any specific

channels. "A martial law atmosphere is being created. I don't want to name the TV channel, but it is making it seem as if martial law is about to be imposed," he remarked. Reflecting on historical events, he lamented that the courts were not open on key dates when martial laws were imposed.

"I wish the courts were open on 12 October 1999, when Pervez Musharraf ousted the elected prime minister. I wish the courts were open on 5 July 1977, when Ziaul Haq removed the elected prime minister," he said.

CM Gandapur accepts demands of Bannu jirga leaders

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has agreed to all the demands put forward by the Bannu Aman Jirga, as reported by Geo News. The agreement was reached in a meeting held earlier this week, sources revealed on Wednesday.

Sources familiar with the discussions indicated that the jirga called for dismantling armed groups in the province, empowering the police with enhanced night patrols, allowing the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) to conduct

search operations, and ensuring that missing persons are presented before courts.

During a meeting held late Monday, CM Gandapur addressed the concerns of the Bannu jirga members. He clarified the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) position on Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, describing it as a strategic approach rather than a conventional military operation. "The ISPR has clarified that Azm-e-Istehkam is a strategy to combat terrorism and extremism," Gandapur informed the jirga members.

Chairs meeting of provincial planning ministers Ahsan stresses collective efforts for national development

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to revitalize the spirit of federalism and promote economic and social development, Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting with provincial planning ministers.

This initiative marks a significant revival of the consultative sessions, started by the previous PMLN government in 2013-2018, aimed at harmonizing provincial economic policies with federal goals, said a press release.

The meeting focused on aligning development projects with the Annual National Development Plan, optimizing utilization of allocated funds for higher education, and strategies for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the imperative of federal-provincial collaboration to address pressing challenges, including rapid population growth, healthcare sector deficiencies, and education sector shortcomings.

He stressed the need for collective efforts to achieve national development goals, particularly in the wake of the seventh census results, which predict a doubling of the population within 24-30 years.

The minister expressed concern over Pakistan's lagging position in healthcare and education, citing issues like diabetes, hepatitis, tuberculosis, malnutrition, stunting, and out-of-school children. He directed the Federal Bureau of Statistics to collect data on out-of-school children and emphasized the need

for federal-provincial collaboration in healthcare and education.

Despite fiscal constraints, the minister committed to funding federal universities through the Federal Government and Provincial universities through Provincial Governments. He acknowledged the brain-drain due to lack of incentives for university faculty and called for consultative workshops on the five-year plan, involving provinces, stakeholders, think tanks, and experts.

The minister reiterated the need for collective efforts to achieve national development goals, committing to hold monthly consultative meetings with Provincial Planning Ministers to ensure ongoing collaboration and progress.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal chaired a high-level meeting with provincial planning ministers.

PTI-led opposition alliance announces country-wide protest

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led opposition alliance announced a country-wide protest on Friday for the release of 'innocent' prisoners including party chairman Imran Khan.

Speaking to media persons after a meeting of the Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ayen—an opposition alliance led by the PTI—former Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser said that they would be holding 'peaceful' protest demonstrations across the country on Friday.

He said that they are protesting for the three

prime demands including the end of sky-rocketed inflation, the establishment of peace, and the release of the PTI founder and all other political prisoners who have been behind the bars in 'fabricated' cases.

"The incumbent federal government enjoys a fake mandate," Asad Qaiser added.

Speaking on the occasion, Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai claimed that Imran Khan is the 'most popular' leader in Pakistan at present.

The PkMAP chief vowed to struggle for the release of all political prisoners, including the PTI founder.

"The entire nation is requested to participate in the protests for the great cause," Mahmood Khan Achakzai added. The PkMAP chief said that they are ready to take every step to take Pakistan out of crises.

Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) Chairman Allama Raja Nasir Abbas said that the government is mulling to impose Article 6 against the PTI founder.

Imran Khan refutes claims of inciting GHQ protests

Monitoring Desk

RAWALPINDI: Imran Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on Wednesday stated that a narrative has been created with an agenda to accuse him of inciting the public to protest at the General Headquarters (GHQ) during the May 9 riots.

In a statement released on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), he clarified that in the nearly three-decade history of PTI, there has never been an instance of violent protests. "Over the past two and a half years, the worst tactics were used against PTI to incite violence," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador H.E. Jiang Zaidong being briefed by Federal Minister for Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan, during a high level meeting in Islamabad. Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi is also present in the meeting.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Reforming militants

A major question confronting the state concerns those militants who have laid down their arms — euphemistically referred to as the ‘good’ Taliban. Ask the people of areas badly hit by militancy, and they want nothing to do with these individuals.

For example, at the recently concluded Bannu Amn Jirga, participants wanted the ‘good’ Taliban out of their area, while calling for an end to pickets set up and patrols by such fighters. This is a dilemma for the state: what to do with those who are willing to forgo violence? The matter is complicated, and a solution should be found by consulting the people’s representatives, security experts and academics.

By all means those terrorist ideologues and facilitators responsible for the killing of thousands of Pakistani civilians and security men over the years cannot be welcomed with open arms, and must face the courts. Similarly, militants — good or bad — cannot be allowed to roam around freely and create a parallel structure, even if they have surrendered to the state: only the government has the authority to maintain law and order across the country.

But the question of the thousands of foot soldiers, particularly child fighters groomed by terrorist groups and juveniles, is more complex. Pakistan is not alone in facing this dilemma; for example, around 40,000 wives and children of IS fighters are currently being held in a Syrian camp run by Kurdish armed groups, as in most cases their countries of origin refuse to take them back.

Instead of giving militants — who surrender to the state and promise to renounce violence — complete liberty, they can be put through deradicalisation programmes.

Such initiatives have been tried before, in Swat for instance, at centres run by the military as well as NGOs. Initially, hard-core militants should be separated from low-level cadres not involved in gratuitous violent activity, with the former punished as per the law.

The deradicalisation process should involve psychological help as well as education and vocational training, so that the reformed militants can contribute to society. Even after completion of the programme, security forces need to keep an eye on the erstwhile militants so that they do not ‘relapse’ and return to the path of terrorism.

Of course, this is not easy, and will require funds and consistent effort. Moreover, the successes and failures of previous deradicalisation programmes need to be scientifically analysed so that the same mistakes are not repeated.

Deradicalisation should be seen as one component of countering violent extremism, which is part of the revised National Action Plan. Along with religiously inspired militants, it can also be extended to Baloch fighters who wish to renounce violence, and reintegrate into society.

Mental health rights

Ali Burhan Mustafa

Some years ago, in a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court issued a transformative decision in the Safia Bano case, significantly advancing the integration of mental health considerations into the country’s criminal justice system.

Led by a five-member bench, with renowned psychiatrist professor Dr Mowad Hussain Rana serving as amicus curiae, the court declared that carrying out the death sentence in the case of a mentally ill prisoner incapable of comprehending their punishment violated the principles of justice.

The ruling mandated the formation of medical boards for comprehensive evaluations, resulting in the commutation of some death penalties to life imprisonment.

It also directed legislative amendments and prison rule revisions to ensure fair treatment and proper care for mentally ill inmates. This included establishing specialised forensic mental health facilities and training programmes for judicial personnel.

By setting a precedent for considering severe mental illness as a mitigating factor in capital cases, the decision aligned Pakistan’s legal framework more closely with international human rights standards, emphasising a just and humane approach to mentally ill individuals within the criminal justice system.

In cases involving Imdad Ali, Kaneezan Bibi, and Ghulam Abbas, Pakistan’s judiciary grappled with complex issues of mental health and criminal responsibility. Imdad Ali, initially facing death for a murder in Burewala, had his sen-

tence commuted to life imprisonment due to schizophrenia. Kaneezan Bibi, convicted of multiple homicides in Toba Tek Singh, also had her death penalty changed to life imprisonment because of schizophrenia. Ghulam Abbas, convicted of murder in Rawalpindi, saw his execution halted after a medical board identified cognitive impairments and psychotic symptoms.

These cases underscored the need for clear protocols in handling mental incapacity claims during trials and highlighted the crucial role of psychiatric assessments in ensuring fair judicial decisions, reflecting a growing awareness of mental health in Pakistan’s legal system.

In 2016, a three-member Supreme Court of Pakistan bench, presided over by chief justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, issued a verdict imposing capital punishment on Imdad Ali. The judgement, which posited that schizophrenia did not qualify as a mental disorder, elicited substantial controversy and juridical discourse. This ruling underscored the ambiguities and shifting perspectives within Pakistan’s judicial framework concerning mental health issues. The judgement was later reversed.

Before Partition, Pakistan’s mental health laws were rooted in colonial-era statutes like the Lunacy Act of 1912 and provisions from the Indian Penal Code of 1860, maintaining outdated views through Chapter XXXIV of the Criminal Procedure Code. Despite the supersession of the Evidence Act of 1872 by the Qanun-i-Shahadat Order in 1984, terms like ‘lunatics’, ‘unsound mind’ persisted, impacting mental health practices

post-independence. It wasn’t until 2001, under Gen Musharraf’s administration, that the first mental health ordinance emerged, later affected by the 18th Amendment. Provincial legislation in Sindh (2013), Punjab (2014), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2017), and Balochistan (2019) aimed to modernise mental health laws.

Since 2021, despite clear directives from the Supreme Court in the Safia Bano case, critical aspects of mental health and forensic psychiatry in Pakistan have languished. The establishment of specialised forensic psychiatric expertise, crucial for medical board evaluations, remains unrealised due to a lack of initiative from the state, the Higher Education Commission, and academic institutions.

Furthermore, no efforts have been made to reform prison rules uniformly across Pakistan or to create specialised forensic settings for mental health offenders. Capacity-building initiatives for judicial officers, law professionals, security personnel, and others engaged in mental health cases have also been conspicuous by their absence.

This stagnation is alarming given the Supreme Court’s explicit recommendations. The failure of both the legislative and executive branches to implement necessary reforms reflects a concerning disregard for mental health within Pakistani society. The disconnect between judicial directives and practical implementation underscores a pressing need for immediate action to address these systemic shortcomings and uphold the rights and well-being of individuals affected by mental health issues in the criminal justice system. -- Courtesy Dawn

No joy in Dhaka

Mahir Ali

There is a sense of irony in watching tanks and armoured personnel carriers on the streets of Dhaka, defending a government that traces its lineage to the forces that resisted the Pakistani army’s ultimately futile effort to abort the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

This month’s unrest in the nation once known as East Pakistan was spurred by the re-imposition of laws that reserved around 30 per cent of government jobs for the descendants of those who fought in the Bangladesh war of liberation. The quota was uncontroversial when it was introduced by the present prime minister’s father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1972. Hardly anyone could have objected to special consideration for the stalwarts of the resistance to Islamabad’s hegemony, or their families.

Half a century later, such a law is harder to defend — particularly when unemployment among graduates is substantially higher than the national average. The quota was effectively rescinded in 2018, until revived by a high court last month. After dozens of deaths and hundreds of arrests, it is likely to take much more than a supreme court decision sharply reducing the quota to diminish the rage that led to the unrest, which has lately been subdued following curfew and shoot-on-sight orders.

Unfortunately, Sheikh Hasina Wajed’s reign across four consecutive prime ministerships since 2009 — plus a previous stint as Bangladesh’s second woman prime minister after Khaleda Zia — has been accompanied by an apparent determination to turn Bangladesh into a one-party state. That’s precisely what her father had disastrously

plunged for in the months before he and most of his family were murdered by Bangladeshi army officers in 1975.

Bangladesh had a Gen Zia in charge two years before Pakistan did, but he was killed by the military in 1981, paving the way for a fellow general more in line with the Pakistani Zia’s religious predilections. A joint effort by Hasina and Khaleda Zia managed to topple Ershad, and Zia became prime minister for a second term. It appeared a better outcome than achieved by the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy in Pakistan, but yet another military intervention led to the imprisonment of both the ‘begums’. However, by 2009 Hasina was back at the helm.

She has been there ever since, come hell or high water, based substantially on condemning the opposition to prison, or worse. There have been deaths in jail and disappearances under her watch, and her aim is seen as a one-party state of the kind her father sought to institute months before he was assassinated. Despite all his missteps, nothing of that sort was on the agenda of Mujib’s Pakistani equivalent, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Courtesy of Dr Kamal Hossain, Bangladesh managed to establish a constitution in 1972, before Pakistan managed to do so almost a year later. Unlike Pakistan’s, it was undeniably secular and potentially socialist. Hossain, who served as first law minister and then foreign minister under Mujib, was caught unawares when the leader alongside whom he had been imprisoned in Haripur in 1971 proclaimed a one-party state in February 1975. He was murdered alongside family members in August that year, and the military coup spawned the equally short-lived Zia rule, fol-

lowed by the Ershad interregnum that in many ways imitated the fundamentalist trajectory of Pakistan’s Zia.

The return of democracy has not been smooth, with subsequent military interventions vying for attention with political squabbling that always seemed to have more to do with egos than ideology.

Bangladesh’s economic growth rate since 2009 has been impressive, based to a large extent on garment exports — which have relied primarily on sweat-shops with occasionally deadly locati-ions. It’s an industry that mostly employs vulnerable women, and in which demands for safer working conditions and higher wages have been crushed by the state.

The achievements of Sheikh Hasina’s government stretch from relatively impressive economic figures to state capture stretching from the military to the judiciary. No civilian government in Pakistan can claim to have been equally successful, notwithstanding the obvious parallels related to punishing political opponents.

The question for Hasina’s government now is whether backtracking on quotas that are assumed to have benefited the ruling party will suffice to calm popular anger that extends beyond that particular point to unequal growth, and suspected corruption where the current culprits can more readily be pinpointed under effective one-party rule.

Notwithstanding Bangladesh’s successes, its failures cannot be ignored. Far less repression and a lot more democracy could set it on a more productive path — and the same essentially goes for Pakistan. But embarking on it with Hasina’s Awami League still at helm could be seen as an impossible dream. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoaib Noshervani presides over the 7th meeting of Local Councils Finance Commission.

Korea, Japan, Pak collaborating on groundbreaking agriculture initiatives: Chairman PARC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Agricultural Research Council Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali Wednesday shared a vision for a transformed agricultural sector in which Pakistan will join forces with Korea and Japan to leverage cutting-edge technologies and expertise to enhance Pakistan’s capacity for producing quality-based disease-resistant seeds.

Talking to PTV news, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, unveiled a game-changing trilateral partnership with Korea and Japan, poised to drive

innovation, boost crop yields, and ensure food security in Pakistan. This historic collaboration marks a new era in agricultural cooperation between our nations, he added.

“By pooling our resources and expertise, we can address pressing challenges, ensure food security, and propel Pakistan’s agriculture sector into a new era of growth and prosperity”, he mentioned.

To produce local seeds in Pakistan, he said that Korea’s expertise in seed technology and Japan’s knowledge in plant

breeding will be combined to enhance Pakistan’s capacity for producing high-quality, disease-resistant seeds.

This will reduce reliance on imported seeds, ensuring self-sufficiency and improved crop yields, he added.

He further explained that Research and Korea’s renowned research institutions will collaborate with PARC to establish state-of-the-art research facilities, focusing on developing climate-resilient crop varieties, improving soil health, and exploring novel agricultural practices.

Finance minister vows to protect consumers’ rights on priority, empower vulnerable

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik Wednesday reiterated the government’s unwavering commitment to consumer protection, assuring that it will remain a top priority where Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was taking aggressive measures to not only end power outages but also uplift the most vulnerable segments of society. Talking to a private news channel, he while elaborating on the government’s strategy

explained that efforts are underway to create a conducive business environment for the power sector to flourish. “We are not just focusing on privatization, but also on building a robust framework that encourages investment, innovation, and competition,” he said.

This multi-pronged approach, he added, will not only enhance the efficiency and reliability of power supply but also attract private sector participation, driving economic growth and job creation, he mentioned.

Rupee sheds 10 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 10 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.50 against the previous day’s closing of Rs 278.40.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279 and Rs 280.75 respectively.

The price of Euro came down by Rs 1.24 paise to close at Rs 301.55 against the last day’s closing of Rs 302.79, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

WAPDA supplied 34.436b units to national grid during FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has supplied around 34.436 billion clean and low-cost units from its various hydel stations to the national grid system during the last fiscal year 2023-24.

As per official data, 22 hydel power stations of WAPDA cumulatively provided 34.436 billion units of electricity in 2023-24, which is 3.266 billion units more than that of fiscal year 2022-23.

Tarbela Hydel Power Station generated 13.424 billion units, Tarbela 4th Extension 4.672 billion units, Ghazi Barotha 6.556 billion units, Mangla 5.276

billion units, and Neelum-Jhelum Hydel Power Station generated 762 million units. While, rest of the generation i.e. 3.747 billion units - was contributed by other hydel power stations of WAPDA.

This increase in hydel generation by WAPDA to the tune of 3.266 billion units helped save national exchequer an amount of Rs. 143.7 billion, if the same quantum of electricity had to be generated through imported furnace oil. WAPDA achieved this additional hydel power generation because of the improved hydrology and effective operation and maintenance of its Hydel Power Stations.

PSX gains 409.92 points to close at 79,397.01

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 409.92 points, a positive change of 0.52 percent, closing at 79,397.01 points against 78,987.09 points on the last working day.

A total of 386,980,823 shares were traded during the day as compared to 316,245,462 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 14,899 billion against Rs 17,074 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 430 companies transacted their

shares in the stock market, 228 of them recorded gains and 155 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 47 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were SILK Bank Limited with 36,867,747 shares at Rs 1.10 per share, HASCOL Petrol with 25,777,994 shares at Rs 6.69 per share and PIA Holding Company with 17,163,702 shares at Rs 16.31 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 70.00 per share price, closing at Rs 7,020.00.

Aleem invites Chinese companies to invest in different sectors of economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister of Investment Board, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday said that Pakistan is extending business visa facility to investors from 124 countries including China and invited more Chinese companies to invest in different sector of national economy.

Abdul Aleem Khan along with Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi briefed the Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong on the investment opportunities existing in different sector of the

economy, said a press release.

In this session, the details of the establishment of industries from China to Pakistan under matchmaking industry were presented. During the briefing, seven major sectors were finalized, which include medical equipment, plastic industry, textile, leather, edible meat, fruit & vegetables and waste.

While giving briefing to Ambassador of China Jiang Zaidong and the Chinese delegation, Abdul Aleem Khan said that there are opportunities in Pakistan to invest in infrastructure, housing and other important sectors. He invited more

Chinese companies to come to Pakistan and invest here. He assured that the Chinese brothers are our guests and their fool proof security would be assured at all costs and welcomed the participation of Chinese Ambassador in the briefing session.

Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong assured all possible support for investment in Pakistan and said that business organizations from China will fully participate in the promotion of trade here. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi said that with China Friendship, brotherly relations, investment is always the top priority for Pakistan.

New LESCO BoD formed, Amir to head

LAHORE (APP): New Board of Director (BoD) of Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has been constituted, with Amir Zia as its chairman.

He said that a meeting of the new BoD was held on Zoom here at LESCO Headquarter in which the new Chairman Amir Zia, General Secretary Asad Sahafi, and members Rana Obaid, Zubair Liaquat, Zafar Mehmood and Tahir Basharat Cheema participated.

Governor KP calls for promoting industrial sector of KP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday called upon the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to explore measures for enhancing sustainable industrial development in different regions of the province on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi said this while in a meeting with the Chairman FBR, Malik

Amjed Zubair Tiwana and discussed different aspects of ensuring revenue and development of the trade and industrial sector of the province to attain sustainable economic growth and social prosperity in the country.

The senior officials of FBR and other concerned officers also attended the meeting, which also deliberated on measures to promote industrial growth in the province.



QUETTA: A delegation of Poultry Farms Association meeting with Provincial Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development Bakht Muhammad Kakar.

Governor KP advocates for sustainable development in oil, gas exploration areas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi in a strategic meeting held with Ahmed Hayat Lak, Managing Director of the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), on Wednesday emphasized the critical need for enhancing community welfare and sustainable development in regions impacted by oil and gas exploration activities.

The discussions focused on three key initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for residents in these areas. Member Provincial Assembly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ahmed Kundi was also present in the meeting.

Governor Faisal Kundi underscored the importance of facilitating health and education services in areas where OGDCL has successfully

explored oil. Recognizing the significant contributions of these regions to the province's and the country's energy resources, he advocated for investments that will ensure residents benefit directly from these natural resource discoveries.

This initiative aims to bridge the gap in healthcare and educational infrastructure, providing long-term benefits to the local population.

Addressing the energy needs of less privileged communities living around the oil and gas exploration sites, the Governor called for the deployment of solar energy systems funded by OGDCL. Many of these communities struggle with the high cost of electricity bills, making it difficult for them to afford consistent power supply.

He said by utilizing OGDCL's Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) funds to provide solar systems, these communities can gain access to sustainable and cost-effective energy solutions. This move is expected to promote sustainable energy practices, reduce dependency on conventional power sources, and alleviate financial burdens on underprivileged families, while also supporting environmental conservation efforts in the region, he added.

Special attention was directed towards the communities in Karak, a district noted for its significant natural gas extraction activities.

The Governor emphasized that Karak, being a major contributor to the province's natural gas output, should see targeted development initiatives.



LAHORE: The students of various universities called on Chancellor/Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan here at Governor House.

Minister Yousafzai vows strict action against illegal cutting of trees

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Forests and Environment Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai has said that strict legal action will be taken against those involved in cutting of the forests and no one would be spared in this regard.

He expressed these views while talking to delegations from various areas here in office on Wednesday. Taking action against the people involved in forest cutting and officials of the forest department in violation of ban on cutting, he said that 3 officials will be suspended and an FIR will be registered against those involved to send them to jail.

The provincial minister said that forests and tourism are inseparable and for this purpose a record plantation will be carried out in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai said the provincial government had taken notice of a video regarding cutting of trees in Alai Sub-Division of Battagram and an 8-member committee was formed under the chairmanship of Syed Zubair Shah Range Forest Officer with directives to furnish a report within 48 hours.

Ban imposed on transportation of timber in KPK

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, taking notice of news in a section of media about logging, on Wednesday imposed complete ban on transportation and procurement of wood.

The government has also constituted seven teams to check transportation of timber and to investigate issue of logging.

Meanwhile, anti-corruption department has also started probe into illegal cutting of forest reiterating that stern action would be taken against officials that were found involved in logging.

PPP criticizes KP govt over deforestation

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Information, Amjad Khan Afridi, has strongly criticized the provincial government for its failure to prevent deforestation.

In a statement, he claimed that the government's slogan of protecting forests is merely a paper exercise, with no real action taken on the ground. He said that forest officials have failed to protect our forests, alleging that trucks loaded with timber are operating day and night under government patronage.

He highlighted the helplessness of the public against the powerful timber mafia, which he accused of operating with impunity.

Mariyum demands Punishment after confession of Imran about May-9 events

LAHORE (APP): Senior Punjab Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb has said that the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has confessed to his role in instigating the events of May 9, and now he should be punished for his crimes. Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday she described the PTI founder's statement as a moment of guilt, witnessed by the entire nation. She alleged that the PTI founder had repeatedly attacked the state institutions since 2014, including an assault on the PTV. She called for accountability, asserting that

the PTI leader manipulated the RTS system to rig the 2018 elections, thereby imposing his leadership on the country. She also accused him of engaging in digital terrorism, damaging the nation's reputation through foreign conspiracies, and advising the IMF against providing financial assistance to Pakistan in 2022, pushing the country towards economic hardship. The minister labeled May 9 as a dark day in the country's history, accusing the PTI of inciting violence and targeting government properties.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi visiting the Saint Jan Cathedral Church at Cantt area.

PML-N-led govt to complete five years' term: Sher Gorchani

RAJANPUR (APP): Provincial Minister for Mines and Minerals, Sher Ali Gorchani said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led government would complete its five-year constitutional term.

Talking to media persons here Wednesday, he said there are few elements who want to derail democracy, economic development, prosperity and thus seeking to sabotage law and order situation of the country.

They wanted to meet the nefarious task by disseminating disinformation about the government, he said.

He said Pakistan entered into avenue of

prosperity under leadership of Mohammed Nawaz Sharif which was unprecedented in comparison to past.

He termed Punjab gained exemplary status among the four provinces through guidance of first-ever woman chief minister, Mariam Nawaz.

"Development and prosperity of South Punjab was mission of incumbent government to which it would never back down, he added. He said they are determined to bring subdivisions of Rajanpur like Jampur Fazilpur and eastern mozas at par with upper Punjab with regard to development and prosperity.

Most important purpose of education is to develop tolerance in oneself: Saleem

Independent Report
LAHORE: The students of various universities called on Chancellor/Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan here at Governor House Lahore today. The students informed the Governor Punjab about various issues including girls' hostels, transport and increase in fees.

Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider said that the youth are the future of the country.

He further said that in addition to imparting education to them, the aspect of their moral training is also very important. He said that the most important purpose of education is to develop tolerance in oneself. Governor Punjab further said that it is the

Protests erupt in Shikarpur against rising crime rate

Independent Report
SHIKARPUR: Hundreds of protesters, led by taxi drivers, blocked the Shikarpur-Larkana Indus Highway at the Kerthar Canal Bridge, demanding action against the rising crime rate in the district. The protesters chanted slogans against the administration, claiming that law and order had deteriorated, and citizens felt insecure.

According to details, the protesters gathered at the Gharhi Yaseen police station and marched towards the highway, blocking both sides of the road. The protesters claimed that the police had failed to control crime, and incidents of car theft were on the rise.

The protesters demanded that the authorities take immediate action to improve law and order in the district and ensure the safety of citizens.

308 raids conducted on drug-traffickers hideouts in single day

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said on Wednesday that in one day, 308 raids were conducted on drug-traffickers' hideouts across the province, including Lahore. As a result, 153 suspects were arrested, and 150 cases were registered. The operations led to seizure of 110 kilograms of charas, three kilograms of heroin, and 1,327 litres of liquor from suspects' possession.

The IGP said that since the special campaign began on February 26, police teams had conducted 37,550 raids on

drug-dealers' hideouts across Punjab. As a result, 17,933 accused involved in drug trafficking were arrested, and 17,431 cases were registered. Seized from the suspects' possession were 10,518 kilograms of charas, 56 kilograms of Ice, 190 kilograms of heroin, 276 kilograms of opium, and 1.7 million liters of alcohol.

He directed to further intensify the intelligence-based operations against drug dealers and smugglers. He Punjab said that RPOs, DPOs should personally monitor the anti-narcotics operations.

International News

Kamala Harris leads Donald Trump 44pc to 42pc in US presidential race, poll finds

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Vice President Kamala Harris opened up a marginal two-percentage-point lead over Republican Donald Trump after President Joe Biden ended his re-election campaign and passed the torch to her, a Reuters/Ipsos poll found.

That compares with a marginal two-point deficit Biden faced against Trump in last week's poll before his Sunday exit from the race.

The new poll, conducted on Monday and Tuesday, followed both the Republican National Convention where Trump on Thursday formally accepted the nomination, and Biden's announcement on Sunday he was leaving the race and endorsing Harris.

Harris, whose campaign says she has secured the Democratic nomination, led Trump 44 per cent to 42pc in the national poll,

a difference within the 3-percentage-point margin of error.

Harris and Trump were tied at 44pc in a July 15-16 poll, and Trump led by one percentage point in a July 1-2 poll, both within the same margin of error.

While nationwide surveys give important signals of American support for political candidates, a handful of competitive states typically tilt the balance in the US Electoral College, which ultimately decides who wins a presidential election. A pollster with Trump's campaign played down any polling showing an increase in Harris' support, arguing that she was likely to see a temporary rise in popularity because of widespread media coverage of her new candidacy.

"That bump is likely to start showing itself over the next few days and will last for a while," pollster Tony Fabrizio said in a

memo circulated to reporters by Trump's campaign. Candidates often expect a bump after formally accepting their party's nomination at stage-managed, televised conventions such as the one that Trump had last week. But the poll showed no sign of that.

Bump or not, the most recent Reuters/Ipsos poll underscored the rationale for Biden dropping out of the race and for Harris replacing him on the ticket.

Some 56pc of registered voters agreed with a statement that Harris, 59, was "mentally sharp and able to deal with challenges," compared to 49pc who said the same of Trump, 78.

Only 22pc of voters assessed Biden that way. Biden, 81, ended his reelection effort after a debate with Trump in which he often stammered and failed to aggressively challenge attacks by Trump that included falsehoods.

UK government scrapping use of a barge off English coast to house asylum-seekers

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: The British government said Tuesday it will scrap the controversial use of a barge to house asylum-seekers off the south coast of England as part of its immigration system overhaul. The Labour government that took power earlier this month said that ending the contract for the Bibby Stockholm would save 20 million pounds (\$26 million) next year. It's part of a larger plan to save over 7.7 billion pounds (\$9.9 billion) over the next decade by clearing a huge asylum backlog. The boat has been at the center of controversy since it was first towed into Portland harbor in Dorset a year ago to house up to 500 asylum-seekers.



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators gather on the day of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to a joint meeting of Congress, on Capitol Hill in Washington, U.S.

Plane crashes in Nepal with 18 dead, pilot sole survivor

Monitoring Desk
KATHMANDU: A passenger plane crashed on takeoff in Kathmandu on Wednesday, with the pilot rescued from the flaming wreckage but all 18 others aboard killed, police in the Nepali capital told AFP.

Nepal has a woeful track record on aviation safety and the Himalayan republic has seen a spate of deadly light plane and helicopter crashes over the decades.

The Saurya Airlines flight was carrying two crew and 17 of the

Blast at Mexico tequila factory kills five

Monitoring Desk
MEXICO CITY (INP): An explosion at a factory producing Jose Cuervo tequila in Mexico killed five people Tuesday, local authorities said. "So far the deaths of five people are confirmed, workers of the company," the civil protection unit in the western state of Jalisco said in a statement. Two others were injured, one seriously, the statement added. It was not yet known what caused the blast in Tequila municipality, with the company saying it happened during maintenance work.

"The pilot has been rescued and is being treated," he added.

"Eighteen bodies have been recovered, including one foreigner. We are in the process of taking them for post-mortem."

The flight was being conducted for either technical or maintenance purposes, Gyanendra Bhul of Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority told AFP without giving further details.

UN welcomes declaration on ending division, strengthening unity by Palestinian factions

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK (Online): United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has welcomed the declaration on ending division and strengthening unity signed by 14 Palestinian factions in Beijing. According to the spokesperson for the UN Chief, the Secretary General termed the deal an important step towards furthering Palestinian unity. He said Antonio Guterres has encouraged all factions to overcome their differences through dialogue.

Israeli lawmakers back declaring UN agency 'terrorist'

BEIRUT (Online): The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) may be declared a terrorist organization, its staff stripped of immunity and its activities inside Israel outlawed, under a series of bills that have been proposed in the Knesset.

The UNRWA was established in 1949 to deal with Palestinian refugees and has a mandate to operate in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank

and Gaza. Israel has accused it of aiding and abetting Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups. "We are on the UN's blacklist in any case. All the excessive morality ended on October 7," MK Yulia Malinovsky of Yisrael Beiteinu, who proposed to designate the UNRWA as a terrorist organization, said on Monday. She called the agency "a fifth column" within Israel.

Growing cooperation between Russia and China in Arctic, Pentagon says

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Russia and China are increasingly cooperating in the Arctic region, which could impact regional stability, the US military said as it released its strategy for the Arctic region on Monday.

Russia has reopened hundreds of Soviet-era military sites in the Arctic, the report said. China, which describes itself as a "near-Arctic" state, also has ambitions there and has said it intended to build a "Polar Silk Road." China has its eye on mineral resources and new shipping routes as ice packs recede with rising temperatures. "Increasingly, the (People's Republic of China) and Russia are collaborating in the Arctic across multiple instruments of national power," the Pentagon's report said.

"While significant areas of disagreement between the PRC and Russia remain, their growing alignment in the region is of concern, and (the Department of Defense) continues to monitor this cooperation," it added.

Arctic sea routes are increasingly being used for connecting major economies across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans as global warming shrinks ice packs and allows for longer ice-free periods at sea.

China and Russia have been working together to develop Arctic shipping routes as Russia seeks to deliver more oil and gas to China amid Western sanctions while China seeks an alternative shipping route to reduce its dependence on the Strait of Malacca.

The Pentagon report added that China was looking to leverage "changing dynamics in the Arctic to pursue greater influence and access, take advantage of Arctic resources."

Bangladesh govt accepts apex court ruling to cut job quotas

Monitoring Desk
DHAKA: The Bangladesh government said on Tuesday it would heed a Supreme Court ruling that 93 per cent of state jobs be open to competition, meeting a key demand of students after a week of some of the country's deadliest protests in years.

But students raised fresh demands including the scrapping of a curfew, restoration of internet services and a reopening of campuses, leaving unclear whether the government's acceptance of the court decision would completely defuse the unrest.

Relative calm prevailed for a second straight day in Dhaka and most major cities although the army chief said security had still not been entirely restored after he surveyed the capital city by helicopter.

Almost 150 people have been killed in the violence with more than 1,600 arrested in the two main cities Dhaka and Chittagong. The protests tailed off after the Supreme Court ruled on Sunday in favour of an appeal from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government and directed that 93pc of jobs should be open to candidates on merit.

The government an-

Tanveer stresses to focus skill training in addition with promoting higher education

AIOU's Golden Jubilee commemorative postage stamps launched

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Industries, Production, and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain emphasized the need for focusing on skills education and vocational training, in addition to promoting higher education, to achieve economic development and social prosperity in the country.

Addressing a ceremony held to unveil commemorative postage stamps marking the golden jubilee of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), the minister stated that alongside higher education, skill training would enable graduating students to secure dignified employment upon completion of their education.

Minister Hussain also called for integrating 2.5 million out-of-school children into the educational network to cultivate their productivity as citizens of the country, stressing that education is crucial for economic growth and social

prosperity. He commended AIOU's role in advancing the education sector in Pakistan and reiterated the commitment to providing all necessary resources for promoting quality education. Speaking at the event, Dr Nasir Mahmood highlighted the university's golden jubilee celebration, emphasizing the significance of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's contribution in establishing AIOU as a national asset.

Dr. Nasir mentioned the recent declaration of an education emergency by the prime minister and underscored the university's potential role in this national initiative. He outlined a plan involving 200,000 registered teachers with AIOU nationwide, each responsible for a group of 30 children, aiming to educate 5 million children over the next five years.

During the ceremony, Director General Pakistan Post Samiullah Khan and

Additional Director General Rizwan Javed Hashmi noted the fruitful collaboration between AIOU and Pakistan Post, sharing a common vision and mission. They highlighted the joyous occasion of the university's 50th anniversary and announced the issuance of 100,000 special stamps, available at all major post offices across the country. An unveiling ceremony of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Golden Jubilee commemorative postage stamps was held here yesterday.

Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain, was the guest of Honor, while Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood hosted the event.

Addressing the ceremony, Rana Tanveer Hussain said that Allama Iqbal Open University has made significant progress in the field of education, with 2.5 million children out of school in the country.



Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain addressing an unveiling ceremony of Allama Iqbal Open University Golden Jubilee commemorative postage stamps in Islamabad

Muqam grills PTI chief over refusal to undergo polygraph test

ISLAMABAD (Online): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam quips PTI chief's refusal to undergo polygraph test.

"He who used to say 'I fear no one,' is now afraid of the lie-detecting machine," Muqam said in a statement.

Muqam said that he (Imran Khan) used to say "I am not scared of anyone," is now scared of the

lie-detecting machine. "If he (Khan) is not lying, why is he afraid of the lie-detecting machine?" he questioned.

He falsely claimed "I will die but not go to the IMF" and how can he confront the polygraph machine?"

"Whether he refused the lie-detecting machine's challenge, since the machine does not say 'good to see you,'" the minister questioned.

IGP Islamabad holds khuli katchery

ISLAMABAD: According to the details, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, held a Khuli Katchery at the Central

will not be tolerated. Any citizen facing any issue related to the police can come to the Khuli Katchery. My office is always open for my citizens, the IGP said. IG Islamabad further



Police Office Islamabad, a public relations officer said.

During the katchery, he listened to the issues of citizens and police officers and issued directives on the spot for their resolution.

He said that, resolving citizens' issues on merit is our top priority. Negligence and carelessness in duties

directed the concerned officers to resolve the citizen grievances on merit within the stipulated time frame and report back to the Central Police Office.

He directed all SDPOs and SHO to adhere to the designated office hours and prioritize resolving citizens' issues.

Re-negotiations with IPPs on principles of transparency, accountability crucial to end capacity payments' burden: Dr Suleri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri on Wednesday said that re-negotiations of agreements with the independent power producers (IPPs) based on principles of transparency and accountability is crucial to end increasing burden of capacity payments on the masses.

In an exclusive chat with the SDTV here, the SDPI Executive Director provided a clear way forward to address the power sector crisis leading to increased tariffs hurting the common masses' incomes. He said the IPPs were introduced as panacea in the beginning during the

15-16 hours electricity load shedding occurring in the past, and were promoted as a remedy to make up that shortfall.

Dr Suleri noted that during the process of establishing IPPs, there were flaws in the policies that promoted prevailing elite capture prevailing, whereas proper procedures, due diligence and Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) rules should be followed in the renewal process of IPPs licenses and agreements.

Capacity payment charges, he said needs to be understood that it was like any resource hired for services was left unused but the lender was charging for that resource even if it was kept idle.

"The process for hiring those services needs to be discussed as the resources employed without assessing its compatibility, capacity and efficiency brings the onus on the decision-making quarters for the failure. The policies that are flawed have been made by the government of Pakistan exploited by IPPs," he said.

Many of the agreements with the IPPs have sovereign guarantees awarded to the IPPs, whereas incase of abrupt abolishment of those agreements there would be court of arbitration or grievance redressal mechanisms coming into force causing further damage to the government, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Atta Ur Rehman, chairman senate standing committee on religious affairs and inter-faith harmony presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Senate Committee expresses dismay on Zaireen problems

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Senate Religious Affairs Committee took up the matters of pilgrims heading to Iran and Iraq on Wednesday.

Senator Raja Nasir Abbas, a member of the committee, said that pilgrims faced a number of problems at Taftan border. Things available at border are expensive and of sub-standard.

Forum should talk to the Balochistan government about the complaints on the Taftan border. The chairman committee said that some members of the committee should go to Taftan and look into the matter and also talk to the

Balochistan government.

The member of the committee said to create a complaint cell related to the complaints from the pilgrims and will call the planning commission for the construction of Pakistan House on the Taftan border.

Member Committee Raja Nasir Abbas said to build temporary residences for pilgrims in collaboration with FC and Ministry.

The religious affairs secretary told the committee that a directorate for pilgrims is being made in Baghdad, while Iran is also making a new policy for pilgrimages in Iraq and Syria.

IHC adjourns cases challenging changing of election tribunal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday adjourned hearing on petitions challenging the changing of election tribunal hearing cases about the three constituencies of the federal capital.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petitions against the change of tribunal by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The lawyers of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N)'s successful candidates completed their arguments during the hearing.

The lawyer argued that there was no dishonesty in the decision to change the election tribunal. The ECP has not done anything wrong by changing the tribunal, he said.

The decision was taken under the law for dispensation of justice and confidence in the tribunal beyond prejudice, he said.

The lawyer of the three successful candidates of PML-N Islamabad, Waqas Mir argued that the issue of admissibility of the election petitions is to be seen first. He said that the Election Tribunal issued notices to the successful candidates in the first hearing and called for Form 45 and a written reply.

He said that in the next order, the Election Tribunal issued notices to the returning officers and ordered them to issue warrants for non-appearance. Keeping these orders in mind, a transfer request was made to the ECP.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Rotary Club membership certificate given to Nadia Amad.

CAT upholds CCP's order against media industry giants

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT) has dismissed the appeal filed by the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA), upholding the Competition Commission of Pakistan's (CCP) directive to major media industry players to refrain from violating competition laws in a decisive ruling.

The CCP's action resulted from a thorough enquiry initiated by a complaint from M/s Bol Media

Network, M/s Labbaik (Pvt) Limited, and M/s Bol Enterprises (Pvt) Limited against PBA, Broadcaster Advertisers Council (BAC) and Medialogic (Pvt) Limited. Bol alleged in its complaint that Medialogic had denied it ratings through an arrangement concealed within three distinct agreements involving the PBA, BAC, Pakistan Advertisers Society (PAS), and Medialogic, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

Experts call for better food governance to combat NCDs menace

Thousands of people will face amputations if preventive measures are not taken

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is facing a significant rise in Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and is largely unprepared for the impact. Approximately 65% of premature deaths in the country are due to NCDs, with over 33 million people diagnosed with diabetes and an additional 10 million pre-diabetic. At least 42 million people are hypertensive, and obesity is increasing, especially among the youth. These diseases can be prevented through diet, lifestyle changes, and access to standard treatments. Key dietary risk factors include high consumption of sodium, fats, trans fats, and sugars, which are prevalent in Pakistan's food supply, particularly in ultra-processed foods. Improved food governance is crucial to ensure access to nutritious food.

To address this, Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA) held a seminar today at Blackhole Islamabad, resulting in concrete policy recommendations.



Dr. Tahira Siddique, Deputy Director of the IFA, emphasized the authority's commitment to food safety in Islamabad, including raids & penalties for non-compliant manufacturers. "We need to increase the lab and human resource capacity of IFA to test food samples for contamination and excessive quantities of trans fats, sodium, and sugars. However, we are committed to ensuring the health security of Pakistan," she stated.

Mr. Zubair Faisal Abbasi highlighted the need for updated standards: "There is a strong need to update the mandatory standards about the composition of ingredients in manufactured foods, easy to understand front of packet labeling requirements and efforts to increase food diversity as well as the nutritional density of foods."

Rana Sanaullah advocates for sports' role in social legacies

PARIS (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan, emphasized the significant impact of physical education and sports on creating enduring social legacies during his attendance at the "Change the Game!" Ministerial Forum at UNESCO, Paris.

Participating in the discussion focused on 'Leveraging Quality Physical Education & Sport for Sustainable Social Legacies,' he highlighted Pakistan's commitment to empowering youth through initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the Youth Talent Hunt Programme, aimed at not only identifying future athletes but also instilling long-lasting social values.

Apart from participating in the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics and visiting UNESCO headquarters, Rana Sanaullah Khan ac-

tively engaged in discussions at the forum on utilizing high-quality physical education and sports to achieve sustainable social outcomes.

He commended UNESCO for organizing such a critical event ahead of the Paris Olympic Games, emphasizing how large-scale sports events unite people globally in healthy competition.

Acknowledging Pakistan's youthful demographic, with two-thirds of its population under 24 years old, Rana Sanaullah Khan underscored the Prime Minister's efforts to empower young people through education and active participation.

He stressed that sports not only foster individual resilience and essential skills like leadership and teamwork but also promote international friendships, mutual understanding, cultural diversity

celebration, and improve the physical and mental well-being of youth.

The advisor to prime minister appreciated UNESCO for organizing this high-level forum in the run-up to the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

He added that mega sports events, like Olympics, act as a unifying force in bringing together the entire world in healthy competition — where all of us are winners. The advisor said that Pakistan is a country of 240 million people and two-thirds of the population is below the age of 24 — making Pakistan one of the youngest countries in the world.

Keeping this in view, the prime minister launched a special initiative, called "Prime Minister's Youth Programme", to engage, educate, and empower youth.

Syed Nasir says: Transparency, merit at the forefront of our recruitment

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, physical tests for recruitment in Islamabad Police are ongoing, a public relations officer said.

In this regard, the running examination for both male and female candidates for the posts of Constable and ASI is being conducted in the second phase of the physical test.

The second phase of physical tests is being completed in Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, Sukkur, Quetta, Peshawar, and Karachi under the supervision of DG Safe City Malik Jamil Zafar. DIG Security Muhammad Jawad Tariq, DIG Law and Order/Training Shakir Hussain Dawar, AIG Special Branch Yasir Afridi, AIG Establishment Abdul Haque Umrani, SSP Safe City Muhammad Shoaib Khan.

Army rescues foreign climbers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Army commandos has successfully rescued foreign climbers from Holland, Singapore, and Ecuador on Wednesday who fell ill due to severe weather conditions while attempting to summit K2.

According to a private news channel, the climbers experienced health issues during their expedition, prompting an urgent rescue operation. The mountaineers expressed deep gratitude to the Pakistan Army for their timely intervention, which provided crucial medical aid and ensured their safe evacuation from the treacherous environment.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Board of Investment, Abdul Aleem Khan meets with the Chinese Ambassador, His Excellency Jiang Zaidong to Bolster Economic Cooperation.

US Envoy addresses "Intl Conference on Strengthening Pakistan-U.S. Relations"

ISLAMABAD (Online): US Ambassador Donald Blome while addressing "International Conference on Strengthening Pakistan-U.S. Relations" at Federal Capital said that United States and Pakistan share a long history of partnership and cooperation.

It is a relationship that has endured despite its many challenges. Some observers contend the United States and Pakistan have sometimes struggled to understand each other. But that assessment simplifies and obscures what we have accomplished through several decades of collaboration. "I want to make clear why this relationship is important for the United States and why we have

invested in it over the years. Simply put, we recognize Pakistan's enormous potential. It is one of the world's most populous countries, with a growing and dynamic young population. And in my engagements with that young generation, I continue to be impressed by their ambitions their ideas, their commitment to seeing a better and brighter future for their country. Those sentiments represent economic opportunities to explore in climate, technology, manufacturing, trade, security — areas for growth and development that would not only benefit Pakistan but also the region and the world. We want Pakistan and its citizens to realize those possibilities" he said.



ISLAMABAD: Work in progress on Park Road expansion project in the Federal Capital.

CDA chief vows regular board's meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Wednesday decided to hold regular meetings of its board to track the progress of its initiatives aimed at uplifting and beautifying the federal capital.

He decided to this effect while chairing an important meeting to discuss the key issues regarding the sector development of Islamabad, the Islamabad Development Plan, and the financial position of authority.

The meeting was attended by members of CDA Board, Administrator Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad and other formations concerned, said a news release.

During the meeting, the member finance provided a detailed briefing on the CDA's fiscal status and revenue generation efforts.

It was decided that revenue generation status would be presented every week, detailing both targets and achievements to ensure transparency and accountability.

Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized the need for regular oversight by instructing that weekly board meetings be held to track progress and make necessary decisions promptly.

Several major initiatives were discussed in detail during the meeting. These included the computerization of land and property records, the financial position of authority, and the beautification of the Diplomatic Enclave and parks.

The Serena Chowk underpass project, a one-window operation for customer facilitation, and ongoing mega road infrastructure projects were also discussed, signaling the CDA's comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to the overall development of Islamabad city.