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

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing National Assembly Session on situation in Palestine.

Pakistan observes mourning day in solidarity with Palestine Public fury to boil over if Zionist state not held accountable for bloodshed in Palestine: PM warns

NA passes resolution unanimously to condemn Israeli oppression

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemning the unabated bloodshed of Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation forces and the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, warned that the lava of public anger would get out of control if the Zionist state was not held accountable. The Zionist state has crossed all the limits of crimes... The lava of public anger is boiling... If justice does not prevail and the Zionist state killing innocent people is not held to account, the lava of public fury will be in no one's control. It will risk the annihilation of world's peace and development," the prime minister said addressing the National Assembly after the House unanimously passed a resolution calling Haniyeh's killing a "deliberate conspiracy to sabotage" Gaza ceasefire efforts and condemning the ongoing Israeli "state oppression and brutality" in Gaza.

The prime minister, who earlier also highlighted the issue in the cabinet meeting chaired by him a while ago and coalition parties meeting on Thursday, said the whole

Muslim world including the Pakistani nation was grieved over Ismail Haniyeh's killing. Thanking the members from both sides of the aisle for evolving a consensus on the resolution, he said the parliament's voice would resonate the world over to shock the enemies of Pakistan and strengthen its friends.

He highlighted that the Palestinian people were suffering the worst bloodshed by the Zionist state for the last nine months which killed around 40,000 people including thousands of women and children.

"The cities have turned into cemeteries. The cries have taken over the joys and smiles of the playing children. Palestine is giving a deserted look," the prime minister said and questioned the inaction and helplessness of the world to end the Israeli oppression. He said not only the Muslims rather every peace-loving human being, regardless of faith or creed, was questioning the non-implementation of the international laws and human rights charters for which the world bodies including the United Nations were created.

Cabinet approves Rs. 5 million aid package for each family of missing persons

Law Ministers says special committee to examine genuine cases of missing persons; Aid package approved after cabinet reviewed reports; Cabinet also approves signing of MoU to enhance trade cooperation with China

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Friday said that the federal cabinet had approved a support package for the families of the missing persons under which they would be given financial and legal assistance.

He said that each family of the missing persons would be given a grant of Rs5 million to address their financial troubles.

Addressing a press conference, the minister said that the federal cabinet has approved the recommendations of two committees set up on the issue of missing persons. It has also been decided to take measures including giving relief and legislation to stop the incidents of disappearances in future, he said.

The law minister said that the cabinet has decided to constitute a committee to prepare a mechanism for financial assistance to the affected families.

Furthermore, the National Database Regulatory Authority (NADRA) and revenue authorities would be given instructions to address the problems of these families related to heirship and property.

He said that due to the terrorism, the country had been facing various internal challenges, adding that there were several complex reasons behind the incidents of disappearances.

Azam Nazeer said that the state institutions have also extended positive cooperation and they wanted to address this issue under legal framework.

He said that the government has taken strict actions to resolve the issue of miss-



ing persons. A number of cases were addressed through the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (CoIED), he said.

The law minister asserted that the state is committed to address this issue and would use its all resources for this. Despite heinous allegations, the state has taken laudable measures to give relief to the families, he said.

Meanwhile the Federal Cabinet, chaired by Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif, on Friday approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Trade Promotion Cooperation to enhance trade between China and Pakistan.

The decision was made on the recommendation of the Ministry of Commerce. The MoU was aimed at boosting bilateral trade with focus on several key areas such as smart phone production, new energy vehicles, textiles, agricultural

product processing, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and information technology.

The Federal Government also okayed the enactment of legislation concerning the charter of the National University of Modern Languages, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.

The cabinet also approved the bill for establishing King Hammad University of Nursing and Associated Medical Sciences being established in cooperation with Bahrain on the recommendation of the ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. The university will impart education in Pakistan to meet modern day challenges.



ISLAMABAD: President, Asif Ali Zardari exchanging views with Syedaal Khan, Acting Chairman Senate during meeting held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad.

Senate deputy chairman calls on President

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman of Senate Syedaal Khan on Friday called on President Asif Ali Zardari here. In the meeting, they discussed the overall situation in the country and the legislative matters of the Senate, according to a President House press release.

Khawaja Asif says PTI's claims of forming govt are hollow, unwarranted

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Friday ruled out any possibility for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to hold the reins of government anytime soon. Taking a jibe at PTI founder Imran Khan's sister, Aleema Khan, the minister said that Khan's sister's tone and tenor in her recent press talk was directed at requests to the establishments for talks, adding that no one would talk to them until they were taken to justice for orchestrating May 9 violence.

"Imran Khan was denying his involvement in May 9 incidents earlier, but finally he took the responsibility of the events. PM Shehbaz had also extended an olive branch to the PTI in the National Assembly."

FS briefs diplomats on situation in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the run up to the fifth "Youm-e-Istehsal", Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi on Friday briefed the Islamabad-based diplomats on the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In the meeting, he underscored the grave consequences of India's actions since August 2019 from the perspective of international law, human rights, and peace and security, a statement issued by the Foreign Office said.

President Zardari grieves rain-related losses, urges swift action to aid affected

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives and damage to properties caused by rain-related incidents across various regions of the country. In a statement issued by the President House, he conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives. The president underscored the urgency of accelerating relief efforts to aid those affected.

President Zardari also called for the implementation of precautionary measures to safeguard lives and prevent further rain-related tragedies. He emphasized the importance of timely actions by the administration to ensure the effective drainage of rainwater and mitigate the risks of future incidents. In his prayers, Zardari sought divine peace for the departed souls and strength for the bereaved families to endure their loss.

PM Shehbaz seeks debt reprofiling from China to secure IMF bailout

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday wrote a letter to China with a request of debt reprofiling for Pakistan to secure the IMF's approval for a \$7 billion economic bailout by next month.

According to reports, Pakistan had sought the reprofiling of more than \$27 billion in debt and liabilities with friendly countries including China, Saudi Arabia and UAE to secure a 37-month IMF bailout package.

"I have written a letter to China, it's a matter of

public domain now, for [debt] reprofiling," said the prime minister while chairing a cabinet meeting on Friday.

The World Bank defines the debt reprofiling as "modifications of the aggregate schedule of future country repayments through refinancing, debt substitution, or renegotiations."

The process can help a country to mitigate the currency risk that often exacerbates debt sustainability issues. The prime minister also lauded the friendly ties with China.

Shafqat Abbas appointed as Director General PID Lahore Regional Office



Completed officer, Shafqat Abbas brings a wealth of experience to his new role, having served in various high-profile positions within the Ministry of Information and its affiliated departments and organizations.

His illustrious career includes stints as Director Home Publicity in PID Islamabad, Deputy Director General Information Service Academy, and Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Additionally, he has had the privilege of serving as PRO to former Prime Ministers Shaukat Aziz and Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, as well as Director/PSO in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Prior to this appointment, he held the position of Director General of PID Lahore Regional Office in Lahore. This appointment, effective from July 15, 2024, underscores the government's commitment to strengthening its information dissemination machinery.

Two cops martyred as convoy of judges attacked in Tank

TANK (INP): Two cops were martyred and two others injured when terrorists attacked a convoy of judges' squad vehicles in here on Friday.

According to details, terrorists attacked the convoy of judges' squad at Dera Ismail Khan road near Bhagwal area of district Tank of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As a result of firing, two po-

licemen including Abdullah and Samad were martyred while two officials were injured. The martyred cops belonged to South Waziristan.

The assailants fled the scene after retaliatory action of police. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital. Police cordoned off the area after the area and started search operation for the attackers.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Parliamentarians offering funeral prayer of Shaheed Ismail Haniyeh.

BYC ends Gwadar sit-in after successful negotiations

QUETTA (INP): In a major development, the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) has called off its sit-in in Gwadar district after successful negotiations with the government.

The sit-in was called off after an agreement was signed between Dr. Mahrang Baloch, representing the protesters, and the Gwadar district's deputy commissioner, says in media reports.

According to a statement issued by the Balochistan Home Ministry, the agreement has led to the restoration of internet services in the region.

"The ministry vowed to open all the roads for traffic and remove obstacles from the roads," the deputy commissioner added.

PM, Parliamentarians offer Ismail Haniyeh's funeral prayer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, members of the Federal Cabinet and the Parliamentarians on Friday offered the funeral prayer in absentia of Ismail Haniyeh, the Chief of the Political Bureau of Hamas, martyred in Tehran.

The funeral prayer was held across the country as part of the government's decisions, taken on Thursday which also included the observance of a day of mourning.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, and leaders of the ruling coalition as well as the opposition parties also offered the funeral prayer.

Pakistan witnessed 561 terror attacks during Jan-April 2024, NA told

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan reported 1514 terror attacks in 2023, in which as many as 2922 people were martyred and injured, Interior Ministry said in its report. In a report presented before National Assembly house, the interior ministry said Pakistan witnessed 1514 terror incidents in year 2023, in which 572 armed forces personnel were martyred and 1292 sustained injuries.

Furthermore, 358 civilians were also martyred while 700 sustained wounds in the terror attacks, the written statement of the Interior Ministry said.

The report also highlighted the details of terror incidents from January to April 2024. In current year, Pakistan reported 561 ter-

ror attacks which claimed lives of 167 security personnel and 118 civilians.

Last year, the Anti-Terrorism Department (CTD) released a report on the terror incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2023 where as many as 563 terror incidents occurred in 2023 and out of 563 incidents, police were targeted 243 times. According to the report, the highest 132 incidents of terrorism were reported in Dera Ismail Khan, 103 incidents in Khyber and 89 terror incidents were reported in Peshawar? The report further revealed that 86 times terrorists attacked North Waziristan and 50 times South Waziristan? The report further said that as many as 837 terrorists were taken into custody.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb presiding over a meeting of Economic Coordination Committee (ECC).

NA Defence body expresses affirmation to armed forces for defending territorial integrity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Expressing affirmation, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence unanimously appreciated the Armed Forces for preserving and defending the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan.

The committee resolved that the Armed Forces of Pakistan belong to them and they are with

the Armed Forces.

This resolve was expressed by the Committee in its in camera meeting held on Friday in the Parliament House under the Chairmanship of Member National Assembly (MNA), Fateh Ullah Khan, a news release said.

Earlier the Secretary, Ministry of Defence, briefed the Committee on the organizational struc-

ture and working of the Ministry.

He informed the Committee about the role and responsibilities of the Ministry; assigned to it, under the Rules of Business 1973.

He said that the Ministry plays the role of a bridge between the Government and the Armed Forces in terms of all defence-related matters.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Proscription regime

For over two decades, Pakistan has been proscribing militant groups. But while this list of 'banned' groups has kept expanding, there has been little noticeable reduction in militant activity, apart from temporary periods of calm.

Two fresh entries have been made to Nacta's list of banned groups: the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, closely linked to the TTP, and the Baloch separatist Majeed Brigade. Moreover, the state has labelled the proscribed TTP as 'Fitna al Khawarij', a reference to the rebel group dating back to the early Islamic period. But beyond issuing notifications and using historical and religious terms to delegitimise terrorist groups, a deeper probe is needed to ascertain why the state's proscription regime has failed to produce the desired results.

Religiously inspired armed groups are a product of the Zia-era Afghan 'jihad', while nationalist militants with a separatist bent, particularly in Balochistan, have been around for longer. While the sectarian terrorist group Lashkar-i-Jhangvi was banned in 2001 by the Musharraf regime, the general outlawed five militant groups en masse in January 2002. In the febrile post-9/11 geopolitical atmosphere, it was widely believed that the late strongman had acted to keep Pakistan on the right side of the Americans, who had issued the 'with us or against us' ultimatum to foreign states. Regardless of the motivation, some action was taken against jihadi and sectarian groups. Yet 22 years after the event, the list of proscribed outfits has ballooned from five or six to the current 81. The list is an eclectic mix of armed religious outfits, separatists, and NGOs. But again, the key questions are: why does the list keep on growing, and why does militancy continue?

It appears that the state has pursued a flawed approach towards banning groups. After the first round of proscription in 2002, many of the groups took on new names and continued with business as usual. In some cases, their funds were not frozen, and their key leaders remained free men. Even today, some sectarian groups continue to operate with freedom under different names. To truly neutralise the militant threat, only representatives of the state — the military and civil armed forces — should be allowed to bear arms. Moreover, the masterminds and ideologues of terrorist groups need to be prosecuted legally, and all their sources of funding frozen. A complementary effort to neutralise groups promoting extremist ideologies is also required.

Furthermore, the root causes that attract many ordinary citizens to the terrorist cause — injustice, poverty, lack of opportunity — need to be addressed. After the 2002 proscription, this paper had written that the ban "should have a salutary effect on the law and order situation... and lead to... socioeconomic normality". Twenty-two years later, we still await this elusive normality.

The class war

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

Working people in Pakistan are literally struggling to breathe. If they seek some relief from the heat by turning on a couple of fans and using a refrigerator (assuming they own one), they will be hit with an electricity bill well in excess of their entire household earnings. To rub salt in their wounds, they are forced to pay through their teeth despite long hours of loadshedding.

It should now be common knowledge that this is all happening because the World Bank and IMF forced the so-called IPPs down our throats in 1994, and we are now stuck with binding agreements to pay these power producers at exorbitant dollar rates. Our own venal ruling class — both khaki supremos and civilian juniors — refuse to pay income tax at all, let alone redistribute wealth, so it is left to the blue- and white-collar working masses to foot the bill.

The IPP scandal is only the tip of a very large iceberg. The government of Pakistan has to meet public debt obligations of \$70 billion over the next three years. This does not include private debt to commercial banks which would make the figures even more unfathomable. Seen thus, the class war against working people will only intensify.

This war includes attacks on livelihoods. Urban sprawl, due in significant part to free-for-all real estate development, is swallowing up more and more agricultural land. Small and landless farmers, as well as non-agricultural castes, are thus increasingly pushed to the wayside, and forced into daily wage work in the metropole, bereft of any social safety net. In villages proper, more and

more of the rural poor are subject to some form of servitude or left to abandon agriculture altogether. Even middle-sized farmers are under attack, as was evidenced by the wheat import scandal which pillaged large parts of the Seraiki belt and parts of other-wise prosperous central Punjab.

The industrial working class, once a relatively powerful entity which could defend itself through trade unions, is on the back foot. More than the odd instance of resistance, workers neither have secure pay, decent working conditions, affordable housing nor other basic amenities.

Beyond 'peaceful', metropolitan Pakistan, another form of the class war is playing out in the long-suffering ethnic peripheries. The border trade in and around towns like Chaman and Taftan which sustains millions of working families is being formally criminalised even while the biggest guns of all continue to make wind-fall profits from cars to cigarettes and from Iranian petrol to wheat.

Over the past week, the so-called civilian government of Balochistan demonstrated its unerring commitment to colonial statecraft against thousands of peaceful protesters who have sought to gather in Gwadar and other parts of the province. Their crime was only to voice their entire legitimate demands for economic justice and an end to enforced disappearances.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and KP, mountainous highlands are being devastated in the name of 'tourism' and 'development'.

Land and mineral grabs are routine, the nexus of state and private capital running amok. Here too wheat subsidies are being

slashed and electricity bills jacked up. While there is heroic resistance to this class war, it tends to be in isolated pockets. This is in large part because there is no shared understanding of class, nation and empire of the kind that once animated progressives across Pakistan's unevenly developed social formation. This is not by chance. The state and its organic intellectuals have diligently cultivated hateful ideologies while clamping down on progressive political workers, artists and intellectuals. Today, a new generation of progressives is fighting for the oppressed in its own way, but there is yet to be a major breakthrough that can transcend palace intrigues and cancel culture that animates the majority of young people.

Today's class war is arguably more intense and harder to resist than in the 20th century when mainstream politics was deeply informed by progressive principles. We should, however, take inspiration from iconic organisations like the National Students Federation and Baloch Students Organisation, which saw the struggle of vibrant trade union and farmers' collectivities in Punjab and other parts of metropolitan Pakistan as part and parcel of the struggle of oppressed ethnic-nations, and aligned themselves with national liberation struggles all over the world, including Vietnam, Palestine, South Africa, and many more.

With class war now playing out on ecological terrains that increasingly places all oppressed peoples into the same boat, perhaps this will provide the impetus for another universalist politics that can bring young people together around a shared vision of the future. -- Courtesy Dawn

Communal richness

Jan-e-Alam Khaki

Sectarianism (firqa parasti) is disdained by most right-thinking people. What, however, needs to be differentiated is firqa and firqa parasti. Firqa (branch or school of thought) is a historical development of a community that has a different perspective from the majority community based on the reading and interpreting of sources, upholding the key ethical principles of the faith as shared by all. Sectarianism or communalism, on the other hand, is an attitude or an orientation where one sees their community as exclusively right, holding the final truth and all others as absolutely wrong and worth condemning.

Communities of interpretation are those that are based on the acceptance of the principle that humans as individuals or as a group living at the same time or in the past, think differently. Although it is said that great minds think alike, it is also true that fools seldom differ!

Thinking differently is surely a sign of creativity based on the fact that humans see things not as they are but as they (communities or individuals) themselves are. We, as individuals or communities, perceive and interpret the outside world based on our own experiences, our internal likes and dislikes, the external influences of friends, elders, teachers, books, etc.

It is not that people create a school of thought deliberately as a result of some conspiracy. Big questions or issues always lead to many opinions and interpretations. Take the example of predestination and free will. Are humans practically predetermined, or do what they are supposed to, because they are pre-

grammed? Or, are they absolutely free to do what they can without any external pressure? Can there be one answer to these questions?

When groups of people take a position for relatively longer, they, over time, form schools of thought, sects, communities or denominations. But the nature of knowledge is such that within the same group there arise people who differ with the position taken, then form their own group, leading to the formation of sub-groups.

So, if we understand humans from this perspective, we do not have to be angry about groups or schools of thought coming into existence with time. If all humans were to think alike, perhaps human societies would not have developed the way they have. We need to perhaps appreciate the hadith attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) that differences among the ummah are a blessing.

Two things make a case for diversity of thought: human constitution (the way we have been made) and the way knowledge is produced. Insofar as humans will be humans, they will continue to differ, unless we all become robots to act alike.

Second, knowledge production is a process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. The title of the collection of Allama Iqbal's talks is rightly titled Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.

Imam al-Ghazali wrote Tahafat al-Phalasafa (Rejection of the philosophers), a book refuting philosophers and, lo and behold, refuting his ideas, Ibn Tufail, equally an intellectual giant, wrote Tahafat al-Phalasafa (Rejection of the philosophers). These are examples of deconstruction

and reconstruction of Islamic thought.

This world is to be run by communities of interpretation, sharing their best ideas and developing feasible solutions. Experience tells us that dictators with a messianic image, and the people around them, do terrible long-term damage. Similarly, there may be theological or intellectual dictators who think their ideas are 'Urdu ke akhiri kitab'.

Gra-ve-yards across the world are filled with those who thought they were super thin-kers. But the world manages to thrive without them.

So, where does this argument take us?

I think that, a) we must take differences as a natural phenomenon, and a historical evolutionary process looking at it as such; b) let us avoid thinking we have the absolute truth and others have only a pack of lies; c) do not compare yourself or your community with others and regard yourself as superior and condemn others as inferior and do not go to the extent of running after their lives just because they have a different way of interpreting things, religious or secular.

Lastly, we need to heed the advice of wiser minds: do not look at who has said something, but look at what has been said. Do not always judge, unless you belong to the judiciary. State your position but be willing to listen to a contrary perspective as well.

Exchange of ideas gives rise to finer thoughts — thesis gives rise to antithesis and both to synthesis. Hence, let us regard the different schools of thought as varieties of intellectual or historical experiences and call them, as Farhad Daftary, an Islamic scholar does, "communities of interpretation". -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

France, Pakistan affirm commitment to deepen economic, trade ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): France and Pakistan on Friday affirmed their commitment to deepen economic relations, exploring investment opportunities and expanding bilateral trade.

Ambassador of France to Pakistan Mr. Nicolas Galey called on Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Ali Pervaiz Malik at Finance Division, said press release issued here.

Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik provided an overview of Pakistan's economic progress, highlighting positive trends such as increased foreign exchange reserves, decreased inflation and a

robust stock market, all corroborated by recent ratings from international agencies.

He outlined key reforms underway, including privatization initiatives, energy sector advancements, and restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

The discussion also covered the digitization initiative of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), being implemented with support from McKinsey to enhance tax administration and compliance.

The minister of state highlighted the budget for 2024-25, focusing on strategies to expand the tax

base by integrating untaxed segments and encouraging non-filers to comply.

Significant projects in customs and inland revenue aimed at improving digitization and operational efficiency were also discussed.

Ambassador Nicolas Galey expressed appreciation for the excellent reforms undertaken by Pakistan and offered technical support from France in areas of mutual interest. He recognized the progress made by the Government of Pakistan in stabilizing the economy and expressed confidence in the potential for further collaboration.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance & Revenue Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik was called on by the Ambassador of France to Pakistan Mr. Nicolas Galey.

Import of 100,000MT urea approved for smooth supply, price stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday chaired a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet which approved the import of 100,000 Metric Tons (MT) urea. The committee decided on a proposal submitted by the Ministry of Industries and Production aimed at ensuring sufficient supplies of urea in the market.

"This will also ensure

stability of prices of fertilizer during the cropping season," a Finance Division news release said. Among others, the meeting was attended by Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik, Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Governor SBP, Chairman SECP, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, MD PASSCO, Chairman TCP.

Short-term inflation falls by 0.12 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.12 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on August 1st, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 321.56 points as compared to 321.95 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 18.41 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732, decreased by 0.90 per cent and went down to 309.40 points from last week's 312.22 points.

SBP injects Rs 9.567 trillion into market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) injected Rs 9,567.25 billion into the market on Friday through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah-based Open Market Operation (OMO).

According to OMO results issued here, the SBP conducted an Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on August 02, 2024, for 7-day and 28-day tenors and accepted 44 bids cumulatively amounting to Rs9,482.25 billion.

Rupee on steady recovery

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee on Friday continued its recovery and appreciated by 16 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.50 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.66.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.2 and Rs 280.4 respectively.

Envoy-designate sees US as 'most attractive' destination for Pakistani products

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's ambassador-designate to the United States Rizwan Saeed Sheikh on Friday said America was the 'most attractive' market for Pakistan and 'we have to focus on it to explore more and more economic opportunities.'

He expressed these views while talking to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari during his visit to the chamber, a news release said.

He said that, as a professional diplomat, the foremost responsibility would be to bring both countries further closer.

The ambassador-designate viewed the United States as a consumer society which was why it enjoyed the vital potential of trade and economic connectivity and "I will focus on more and more liaison to facilitate the holding of exhibitions to showcase Pakistani products."

Sheikh said he was convinced that Pakistan would successfully overcome its existing economic difficulties and would also approach the Pakistani-Americans irrespective of their political affiliations to persuade them to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan.



FAISALABAD: A labourer working in a local industry in the city.

Pakistani, Chinese experts discuss enhanced economic growth, connectivity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Experts from Pakistani think-tanks and China on Friday participated in a seminar to discuss potential ways to enhance collaboration between the two countries in multiple fields, particularly economic growth and connectivity.

The event, titled "Pakistan Economy & Growth: Learning from Chinese Experience," was organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), marking a significant step towards strengthening

economic ties between China and Pakistan.

The seminar was aimed at facilitating an exchange of knowledge and optimum practices between the two nations, according to a news release. In her opening remarks, PIDE's Pro VC Dr Durre Nayab emphasized the importance of such interactions in fostering growth and development. She highlighted the need to adopt strategies that have contributed to China's economic success, tailored to Pakistan's unique context.

Mobilink bank launches Pak first women-led incubator program

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital microfinance bank, Mobilink Bank strengthens its commitment to women's economic empowerment with the launch of Pakistan's first-ever industry-specific incubation program designed exclusively for women entrepreneurs. This initiative falls under the umbrella of the Bank's ongoing Women Inspirational Network (WIN) program. The WIN Incubator program aims to empower 25 women entrepreneurs by equipping them with knowledge in core business areas including ideation, planning, business management, financial literacy and marketing. The graduating startups will gain access to a professional network and guaranteed Bint-e-Hawwa loans to fuel their ventures. The most promising startups will compete for a PKR 4 million investment to bring their startup ideas to life.

Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a

global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and digital services to nearly 160 million customers in six dynamic markets that are home to 7% of world's population.

Sumera Abbasi, Executive Director of TIE Islamabad and a recognized leader in the Pakistani startup ecosystem, has been appointed to head the WIN incubator.

"Mobilink Bank is transforming the entrepreneurial landscape in Pakistan with our WIN Incubator program," said Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, Interim CEO Mobilink Bank. "This initiative is aimed at breaking barriers for small women-owned businesses by providing essential tools and resources. Through mentorship, training, and a supportive network, we wish to empower women to turn their dreams into successful businesses and consequently play an integral role in the country's economic development."

PSX turns bullish, gains 485 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 485.68 points, a positive change of 0.62 percent, closing at 78,225.98 points against 77,740.31 points on the last working day. A total of 443,483,358 shares were traded during the day as compared to 278,986,985 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 20.497 billion against Rs 13.094 billion on the last trading day.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where sixships, Maersk Cape-Town, MSC Positano, Athenian, Canopus, Ds Ocean and Lusail carrying Container, Palm oil, Chemicals and LNG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Terminals, Engro Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Health ministers order FIRs against govt offices found with dengue larvae

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafiqe and Khawaja Imran Nazir have issued orders for registration of cases against the government offices where dengue larvae have been detected.

The directive came during the 6th meeting on dengue, infectious diseases and disaster management at the Department of Specialised Healthcare and Medical Education.

Khawaja Salman, Minister for Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education, emphasised the urgency of heightened vigilance following recent rains to prevent a dengue outbreak. He urged the administration of sensitive districts to intensify their efforts.

With commissioners and deputy commissioners personally overseeing anti-dengue operations. He stressed the need for increased anti-

dengue surveillance in Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Faisalabad and called for strict adherence to the meeting's resolutions. He assured that the health department has a robust plan to curb dengue and other diseases, highlighting that government hospitals have adequate dengue medication supplies.

Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Khawaja Imran Nazir expressed his concerns, noting the heightened risk of dengue due to the monsoon rains. He announced the launch of a pilot volunteer service project in Shalimar Town, Lahore, aimed at bolstering anti-dengue efforts at the grassroots level. He mentioned the use of red warning stickers on homes with detected dengue larvae and underscored the importance of reporting suspected dengue cases from private hospitals and

laboratories through the Punjab Healthcare Commission. He also called for increased coordination with electric supply companies and railways and regular DERC and TERC meetings.

In the briefing, Khawaja Nazir was informed that Punjab had reported three dengue cases in the past 24 hours and nine in the past week. From January to August 2023, 15,182 cases were reported, compared to 220 cases since January 2024.

Health Secretary Ali Jan Khan provided a comprehensive briefing on infectious and epidemic diseases, supported by insights from officers of the Special Branch, PITB, and other departments.

The meeting was attended by secretaries of various departments and all commissioners and deputy commissioners via video-link.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Salim Haider and a large congregation offer absentia funeral prayers for Ismail Haniyeh at Masjid Shahada.

KP govt adopts zero tolerance policy against corruption: Barrister Saif

PESHAWAR (APP): Adviser to the Chief Minister for Information, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif here Friday said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against corruption and strict action would be taken against corrupt and commission mafia.

Addressing a press conference along with Communication and Works Department's Minister Shakeel Khan here at the press club, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said that the concerned

ministers and departments would be held responsible in case of any report about financial irregularity or corruption.

He urged people and journalists to identify corruption and financial irregularity so that strict action would be taken against the responsible officials.

Provincial Minister for Communication and Works Department Shakeel Khan said that corruption was unacceptable and Secretary C&W was removed as he was not satisfied with him.

CM grieved over loss of lives in rains

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has expressed a deep sense of sorrow and grief over the loss of precious human lives due to electrocution, collapse of roofs during torrential rains.

The CM expressed her heartfelt sympathies and condolence with the bereaved families over the tragic incidents.

She directed to provide the best medical treatment facilities to the injured persons due to collapse of roofs.

Governor flays attack on judges in Tank

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday strongly condemned the firing incident on judges' vehicles in Tank District.

In a statement, the governor expressed profound sorrow over the loss of two policemen who were providing security to the judges. He conveyed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families of the slain officers. Governor Kundi also offered prayers for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks and patience for their bereaved families. He extended his best wishes for the early recovery of those injured in the attack.

MPAs laud CM's public welfare initiatives

LAHORE (APP): Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb Friday held separate meetings with the Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) Punjab in which matters pertaining to party activities, ongoing development projects in the respective constituencies and political situation were discussed. Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb apprised them about the steps being undertaken by CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif for progress and uplift of the people and the province.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the implementation of the record development

budget is being carried out in a proactive manner and funds have been allocated in the budget for the development schemes. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif is personally overseeing development works. No compromise will be made on the quality, speed and timely completion of the development projects, she added.

The Assembly Members appreciated the steps being taken by CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif for launching development projects along with reducing price-hikes and provision of relief to the people of the province.

CM vows to complete 600 development projects by December

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur on Friday met with parliamentarians and party leaders from all four regions of the province. The meetings focused on resolving public issues, public welfare projects and rehabilitation of infrastructure affected by monsoon rains.

The chief minister announced that over 600 development projects nearing completion across the province, would be finished by December this year. He emphasized the importance of prioritizing

ongoing development projects and devolving development project authorities to the local level. He directed the elected representatives to propose projects based on local needs and priorities, ensuring wise use of public funds. He also announced that these development projects would only be inaugurated when they were fully completed and providing public services.

The chief minister said that he was working to strengthen local government institutions to resolve public issues locally.



LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari addressing a ceremony titled "Problems faced by women journalists: progress and solutions", organised by the National Women Journalists Forum (NWJF).

Female journalists have proven their mettle despite hardships: Azma Bukhari

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has said that the female journalists in Pakistan have proven their mettle despite unfavourable conditions.

She expressed these views while addressing a ceremony titled "Problems faced by women journalists: progress and solutions", organised by the National Women Journalists Forum (NWJF) here on Friday. The event was attended by NWJF President Farzana Chaudhry, Bushra Khaliq, NWJF Senior Vice Presidents Kanwal Naseem,

Sidra Asim, Darakhshanda Alamdar and senior female journalists Fakhria Tehreem.

In her address, Azma Bokhari said that the Punjab government would always stand with them to help solve their issues. "I am happy that female journalists have formed their first national organisation and it is a positive step toward women empowerment." Referring to her fake video, she said that many people advised her to keep silent, but she raised voice on the issue keeping in mind other women's social rights.

Governor KP directs Edwards College admin to address financial, medical, audit objections in 15 days

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting of the Board of Governors of Edwards College was held at the Governor House on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi.

The meeting gave 15 days to address objections related to the college's financial accounts, new discipline, medical fund, interest-free loans and audit issues of the College. The Board conditionally approved Edwards College's annual surplus budget for fiscal year 2024-25.

During the meeting, detailed briefings were provided on the College's annual budget, revised estimates and

expenditures. The Board was also updated on the College's income, resources, admissions status, pension fund, endowment fund and other financial accounts.

The College administration was directed to compile data on the performance of alumni, including those who have succeeded in CSS exams, gained admission to foreign universities, and those representing prestigious medical and engineering colleges. The Finance and Planning Committee of the College was given 15 days to address objections related to the college's financial accounts, new discipline, medical fund, interest-free loans and audit issues.

PU sets up summer camp in China

LAHORE (APP): Punjab University Confucius Institute set up summer camp in China in which a group of 19 students from various Pakistani universities embarked on a captivating two-week adventure, exploring China's vibrant culture and rich history.

Under the expert guidance of Chinese Director at Jiangxi University of Science and Technology (JXUST) Professor Cai JinBao the students experienced a grand reception in Guangzhou, high-speed train ride, Chinese calligraphy, Kung Fu classes, the essence of traditional arts, historic exploration, visits to the fushou canal, Wei's Family House and local museums to get deep insights into China's storied past.

City highlights included tours of Guangzhou tower, shenzhen bay park and a full-day exploration of Zhuhai.

International News

26 detainees freed in biggest post-Cold War prisoner swap

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Jailed US Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and ex-US Marine Paul Whelan were among two dozen detainees from the United States, Russia and a number of their allies freed on Thursday in the biggest prisoner exchange since the Cold War.

The White House said the US had negotiated the complex trade with Russia and other countries. It said eight prisoners held in the West were being sent back to Russia.

Germany confirmed that they included Vadim Krasikov, convicted of murdering an exiled dissident in Berlin.

Turkiye, which coordinated the exchange, said 10 prisoners, including two minors, had been moved to Russia, 13 to Germany and three to the United States. Also involved in the swap were Poland, Slovenia, Norway and Belarus.

"After the completion of the ratification procedures of the parties, the health checks ... the prisoners were placed on the planes of the countries to which they would be travelling with the approval and instructions of the MIT," the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) said in a statement. It said it had authorised the return of the aircraft.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not specifically confirm a swap but was quoted by the state news agency TASS as saying that, in principle, "all our enemies should stay there (abroad), and all those who are not our enemies should return".

In the last major exchange in 2010, 14 prisoners were exchanged.

In December 2022, Russia traded US basketball star Brittney Griner, sentenced to nine years for having vape cartridges containing cannabis oil in her

luggage, for arms dealer Viktor Bout, serving a 25-year sentence in the US.

Krasikov is a colonel in the Russian FSB security service who was serving a life sentence in Germany for murdering an exiled Chechen-Georgian dissident in a Berlin park. President Vladimir Putin had indicated he wanted him back.

Rico Krieger, a German sentenced to death in Belarus on terrorism charges, was pardoned on Tuesday by President Alexander Lukashenko, a close Putin ally. He was also among those released, along with Russian opposition politician Ilya Yashin, Turkey said.

Reuters footage showed a Russian government plane on the ground in the Turkish capital Ankara.

Whelan and Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Russian-British dissident, both jailed in Russia.



Mourners shout slogans in the grounds close to the Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab Mosque during the final prayers for Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh during his funeral in the Qatari capital Doha.

Slain Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh's funeral held in Qatar; Israel warned of revenge

Monitoring Desk
DOHA: The funeral of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh took place in Qatar on Friday following his assassination two days ago in Iran's capital Tehran — one in a series of killings of senior figures in the Palestinian group as the fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza rages.

Haniyeh's coffin, draped in the Palestinian flag, was carried across the mosque past hundreds of people along with the coffin of his bodyguard, who was killed in the same attack in Tehran.

Turkiye blocks Nato-Israel cooperation over Gaza

Monitoring Desk
ANKARA: Turkiye has blocked cooperation between Nato and Israel since October because of the crisis in Gaza and said the alliance should not engage with Israel as a partner until there is an end to the conflict, sources familiar with the process said.

Israel carries the status of Nato partner and has fostered close relations with the military alliance and some of its members.

Bangladesh releases student leaders

Monitoring Desk
DHAKA: Bangladesh police freed six student leaders on Thursday whose campaign against civil service job quotas sparked deadly nationwide unrest, as the government looked to calm tensions and forestall fresh demonstrations. Students Against Discrimination staged nationwide rallies last month that ended in a police crackdown and the deaths of at least 206 people, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data.

The group's leadership were among thousands picked up in the police dragnet that followed some of the worst unrest of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure.

Excessive force leading to unlawful killings in India: UN panel

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Human Rights Committee has expressed concern over the use of excessive force in "disturbed" territories in India, leading to unlawful killings.

The UN committee, in a report released this week, noted that certain provisions of India's Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) and counter-terrorism laws do not comply with the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The committee expressed alarm over the prolonged application of these laws in "disturbed areas" such as districts in Manipur, the occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Assam.

It noted with concern that this extended enforcement has led to "widespread and severe human rights violations, including excessive use of force resulting in unlawful killings.

UN Security Council members condemn Israel's assassination of Hamas leader

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: UN Security Council members condemned the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital Tehran, while permanent representatives the US and UK blamed Iran for destabilizing the region. The Council convened for an emergency session on the killing of Haniyeh at the request of Iran, which was supported by Russia, Algeria and China. Speaking at the session, Chinese Ambassador Fu Cong said China strongly condemns the assassination of Haniyeh.

Calling the incident "a blatant attempt to sabotage peace efforts," Cong stressed that "China is deeply worried about an exacerbation of the upheaval in the region that this incident may trigger."

Similarly, Algeria's envoy to the UN, Amar Bendjama, said: "We are on

the precipice of catastrophe," adding that Israel's attack was "an act of terror" that violated international law and the sovereignty of Iran. "This is not merely an attack on one man. It is a vicious assault on the very foundations of diplomatic relations, the sanctity of state sovereignty and the principles that underpin our global order," he said.

Bendjama strongly condemned the "terrorist act perpetrated by the Israeli occupying power."

Saying that Israel's "blotchy, scorched-earth policy" is leading to a "tide of violence flooding Gaza, the West Bank, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and now the Islamic Republic of Iran," he asked: "Where will this madness end?"

He also called on the international community not to remain silent "as innocent blood is spilled and international law is shredded to pieces."

US says strikes on Tehran, Beirut 'don't help' tensions

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: An Israeli strike that killed a Hezbollah commander in Beirut and the killing of the political leader of Hamas in Tehran "don't help" regional tensions but there are no signs of an imminent wider conflict, the White House said Wednesday.

"These reports over the last 24, 48 hours certainly don't help with the temperature going down," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters when asked about the attacks.

"We're obviously concerned about escalation," Kirby downplayed the risk of an immediate descent into the all-out war that the region has feared since Hamas's October 7 attacks on Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza.

"We don't really think that an escalation is inevitable and there's no

signs that an escalation is imminent," he said. But he said Washington was carefully monitoring developments. "It's not like we're brushing off concerns at all. We're watching this very, very closely and it's been a chief concern of the president," said Kirby.

The strikes on two of Israel's arch foes came less than a week after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the White House for talks with President Joe Biden aimed at pushing a ceasefire in Gaza. Hamas blamed an Israeli strike for the killing of its political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

Israel declined to comment on the attack but Netanyahu on Wednesday said his country had delivered "crushing blows" to its enemies, and explicitly mentioned the killing of Hezbollah leader Fuad Shukur in south Beirut.

Antony Blinken hails closer ties with Mongolia in rare visit

Monitoring Desk
ULAANBAATAR: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Mongolia at the end of a 10-day tour of Asia, hailing growing ties with the landlocked democracy sandwiched between authoritarian powers China and Russia. His long tour, which also took him to Southeast Asia and Japan, has been aimed at hammering home US support for allies and countering China's influence in the region — even if Washington insists it is not pursuing a policy of containment against Beijing.

During a meeting in the Laos capital Vientiane at the end of last week, Blinken raised the issue with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during "frank and productive" exchanges, ac-

ording to Washington.

In Japan and the Philippines, Blinken and US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin announced closer military and defence ties with the countries in the face of what they described as Beijing's "provocations", particularly in the South China Sea.

In Ulaanbaatar on Thursday, Blinken stressed the US approach was not "against any one country". "It's for a common vision that we share for what the future should look like," he said during a press conference.

"And yes, part of that common vision is clearly the freedom... for any country to make its own decisions, to make its own choices about the future," he said.

Ex-BBC presenter pleads guilty to indecent child pictures charges

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Former BBC TV news presenter Huw Edwards, a household name in Britain, pleaded guilty on Wednesday to three counts of making indecent pictures of children. Edwards, 62, who was the BBC's highest-paid journalist and top news anchor until he quit in April, arrived at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court wearing sunglasses through a throng of photographers and camera crews. After confirming his identity, he was asked if he wished to indicate a plea to the three charges, which relate to three different categories of indecent images. Edwards said: "Guilty". Judge Paul Goldspring said Edwards would be sentenced on Sept 16.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting regarding Jinnah Medical Complex in Islamabad

PM directs early construction of Jinnah Medical Complex

Says modern facilities should be provided to patients from all over Pakistan at the Jinnah Medical Complex

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday said measures should be ensured for early construction of Jinnah Medical Complex. While chairing a review meeting here, he said Jinnah Medical Complex should be made a modern tertiary level hospital of not only Pakistan but the region. Modern facilities should be provided to patients from all over Pakistan

at the Jinnah Medical Complex, he said adding services of prominent experts should be hired for the preparation of the master plan of the hospital, for technical assistance and medical instruments. "We established international standard Punjab Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI)," he remarked adding nefarious conspiracy was hatched to destroy PKLI by playing politics on it.

He thanked Aga Khan Foundation for its cooperation in the construction of Jinnah Medical Complex. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jehanzeb Khan, Prime Minister's Coordinator for Health Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath and high-level officials attended the meeting. The meeting was told about the master plan of the

hospital and on progress of its construction. It was informed that Jinnah Medical Complex would be made a trust which would look after the administrative affairs of the hospital. Prime Minister would be patron-in-chief of the trust. Internationally recognized American experts were working on the project while Aga Khan Foundation was providing technical assistance.

Ahsan announces National Task Force on Productivity, Quality and Innovation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday announced to establish a National Task Force dedicated to enhancing Productivity, Quality and Innovation (PQI) across all sectors of the economy for revitalizing Pakistan's economic landscape. "This initiative, set to be launched in August 2024 — coinciding with the month of Pakistan's independence — signals a significant step toward addressing the nation's critical economic challenges, fostering a culture of innovation, and unlocking new avenues for growth," a

news release said. The Task Force, which initially gained widespread support from global and domestic stakeholders during its conceptual phase in the previous tenure, faced setbacks due to political disruptions in 2018. However, with renewed determination and a clear vision, Ahsan Iqbal said he was committed to steering this initiative back on track, fostering an environment where innovation and productivity advancements can drive substantial economic progress. The Task Force's mandate is the promotion of innovation as a driving

force behind economic growth. By encouraging creative solutions, new technologies and cutting-edge practices across industries, the Task Force aims to position Pakistan as a leader in innovation. This includes fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, supporting research and development (R&D) initiatives, and facilitating collaboration between academia, industry, and government. It also aims to leverage innovation and productivity improvements in the agriculture sector to significantly reduce rural poverty.

Warns against politicising issue of electricity bill Reducing electricity prices a top priority for PML-N, allies: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated on Friday that the government was focused on providing relief to electricity consumers, as reducing electricity prices was a key agenda for PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the government, and its allies. In his initial remarks at the Cabinet meeting, Sharif emphasized that the government needed to lower electricity prices to boost the country's exports. He pointed out that without this reduction, neither the agricultural sector nor the industrial sector could expand effectively. Competitiveness in the industry was directly linked to lower electricity prices, he remarked. Sharif criticized the use of electricity issues for political gain, calling it disrespectful to the public. He highlighted that the nation sought a resolution to this problem. Addressing inefficiencies and corruption within the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) and the Energy Sector, and making these institutions efficient, would set the country on the right path. He assured that the government was aware of the people's problems and doing its utmost to address them. Shehbaz noted that the PML-N government

had resolved the 20-hour daily load-shedding issue. At that time, few were willing to invest significantly in electricity production, with China being the only country showing interest in investing in power generation. In 2015, the prime minister mentioned that some of the fastest power-producing plants in history were installed. The government set up four LNG plants, each with a capacity of 500 MW and a turbine efficiency of 64 percent. Credit for these cost-effective plants went to Nawaz Sharif. At that time, NEPRA's tariff was \$8.5, and the plants were built for just \$450,000. These agreements should not be criticized, as they represented a sincere effort to address Pakistan's most pressing challenge. He instructed ministers and government officials to inform the public about the steps taken by successive PML-N governments to eliminate load-shedding in the country. The government had extended the last date for paying electricity bills by 10 days, said the prime minister. Likewise, the electricity tariff for the country's industry had been reduced by Rs 8.5 per unit. A Rs 170 billion subsidy was being provided to the industry in this regard.



Senator Sherry Rehman, Chairperson of the Standing Committee Senate on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, visited the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Headquarters Islamabad

National Youth Festival to be held soon; Rana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, Chairman, the Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) on Friday said that the National Youth Festival would be held soon to showcase the talent of future generation. Talking to the Speaker of the Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmed Khan, he said all possible steps were taken to empower the youth as the future of Pakistan is in the hands of the talented and intelligent youth. Rana Mashhood also apprised the speaker about the initiatives and programmes of PMYP. Malik Ahmed on the occasion appreciated the efforts of Chairman PMYP for providing opportunities to the youth for a prosperous future.

Naqvi conducts surprise visits of Khanna PS

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi made a surprise visit to Khanna Police Station, where he found the investigating officers absent from their offices, while complainants were present. The duty sub-inspector was unable to respond to any questions and the front desk room smelled of cigarettes. Around 1500 motorcycles and several cars were parked at the police station. Mohsin Naqvi expressed displeasure at the deplorable condition of the

police station. He visited the front desk, clerk's room, and lockup and inquired about the cases of the accused in the lockup. He ordered the release of four individuals who were arrested for parking their cars in the wrong place after completing necessary legal proceedings. The interior minister emphasized that there is no justification for parking such a large number of motorcycles in the police station. The motorcycles belong to citizens and must be returned to them.

CDA Chairman directs setting up kiosks, desks for plant distribution

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Friday instructed setting up kiosks and desks at main markets and malls for distributing plants and flags to boost citizen participation in the moonsoon tree plantation drive. The CDA Chairman who also holds the charge of Chief Commissioner Islamabad

chaired a meeting to review the performance of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration. The meeting focused on various key initiatives, including the anti-encroachment drive, price control efforts, Islamabad Food Authority's activities, land record digitization, and the ongoing plantation drive.

Italy, UK embassies' delegation visits Traffic Headquarters

ISLAMABAD: According to the details, following the special directives of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Chief Traffic

and briefed on their processes and effectiveness. CTO Islamabad briefed the delegation that ITP is playing a vital role in various sections through modern technical projects



Office (CTO) Muhammad Sarfraz Virk gave a tour of Traffic headquarters to Italy and UK embassy delegation, a public relations officer said. He said that the delegation was briefed about the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) central system, modern technological digital one-window operational halls, and other sections,

including traffic police field operations and the e-challan system. Moreover, the delegation was informed that ITP is deploying all resources to ensure the provision of all facilities under one roof for citizens coming to obtain driving licenses and for the protection of life and property of citizens through modern technology.

Naqvi grieved over death of IG Nasir's mother

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed grief and sorrow over the death of IG Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi's mother on Friday. The Interior Minister expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to Ali Nasir Rizvi and the bereaved family. Mohsin Naqvi prayed for the rest of the soul of the deceased in peace and grant of patience to the bereaved family members.

CTD gets one-day custody of Raof Hassan

ISLAMABAD (APP): A local court on Friday granted the counter terrorism department a one-day physical custody of PTT leader Raof Hassan in terrorism case. The accused was produced before Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Judge Tahir Abbas Supra who also heard his bail petition. Announcing its verdict, the court instructed the police to present the accused again tomorrow. The CTD has arrested the accused on July 31, in terrorism case. During this day's hearing, Prosecutor Raja Naveed prayed the court to grant further seven-day custody of PTT's information secretary to investigate the other names in the crime.

Court approves bail of PTT's social media coordinator

ISLAMABAD (APP): A local court on Friday granted post-arrest bail to Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI)'s international social media coordinator Ahmed Waqas Janjua in a case registered under Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA). The court granted the bail against surety bonds worth Rs 50,000 and ordered to release the accused. The accused was produced before the court of duty magistrate Abbas Shah. He was accused of spreading information of terrorism on social media and having explosive material as well. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had registered a case against him under PECA for anti-state propaganda while the Counter Terrorism Department of the police registered an FIR regarding the recovery of explosive material.

IHC stops action against DG NADRA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday suspended the decision of the National Database Regulatory Authority (NADRA) and Higher Education Commission (HEC) related to the non-verification of the degree of Director General (DG) NADRA. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani of IHC heard the case. It may be mentioned here that the HEC had blacklisted the account of NADRA's DG for degree verification. The court stopped the two institutions from taking any legal action against the petitioner while suspending their orders.

BISP pivotal role in crisis caused by climate change acknowledged

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Sherry Rehman Friday acknowledged the role of BISP's crucial interventions, particularly during the devastating floods of 2022. They highlighted that BISP was the first to reach flood-affected communities across the country through its dynamic database, disbursing Rs. 70 billion to 2.7 million families in need. Senator Rubina Khalid also discussed BISP's proactive measures to handle emergencies caused by climate change. She introduced the Hybrid Social Protection Scheme, designed to promote savings culture among beneficiaries, ensuring they are better prepared for unforeseen climatic events.



ISLAMABAD: A large banner hangs over the Zero Point Bridge in Federal Capital, observing a commemorating 5 August 2019 as a Black Day in the history of Jammu and Kashmir.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan in a meeting with speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan.

Panel discussion on Anti-Rape Act 2021 highlights challenges in gender based violence cases

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Law and Justice, in collaboration with the UK-Pakistan Serious Crime and Law Enforcement (UPSCALE) programme, organized a panel discussion to increase awareness of the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial), Act 2021. The event featured experts with experience in implementing the Anti-Rape Act and dealing with cases of gender-based violence. The session was inaugurated by Federal Secretary for Law and Justice, Raja Naeem Akbar and chaired by Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson of the Anti-Rape Special Committee. Notable experts from law enforcement and civil society including Ghulam Sarwar Nihung, Prosecutor General ICT, Dr. Inam Waheed Khan, DIG Police

and Advisor UPSCALE, Barrister Usama Malik, Director, Directorate of Legal Education Pakistan, and Nida Aly, Executive Director of the Asma Jehangir Legal Aid Cell, provided perspectives on the challenges police, prosecution and lawyers face in ensuring justice for women in gender-based violence cases. Member of the Special Committee, and Community Protection Advisor at UPSCALE, Zainab Mustafa concluded the plenary session by highlighting the government's commitment to improving the investigation and trial of gender-based violence crimes. In his opening statement, the Secretary Law and Justice, Raja Naeem Akbar stated, "This seminar aims to create awareness on the rights of the citizens under the Anti-Rape Act, 2021."



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah meets with the outgoing Consul General of America, Mr. Conrad Tribble at CM House.

Student volunteers of CUST University visits Security Division

ISLAMABAD: According to the details, the student volunteers of Capital University of Science and Technology (CUST) visited Security Division Islamabad and met with SP Diplomatic Protection Unit (DPD) Raja Tahir, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the SP DPD Raja Tahir welcomed the delegation of student volunteers of CUST University and briefed them about secu-

city division police work. The student delegation visited the Security Division under the Friends of Police Program. The SP DPD fully briefed the delegation about the procedures and advantages of the Security Division. Later, the delegation also visited the CCTV control room, police mess, stable, and diplomatic enclave. Moreover, delegation was fully informed about their procedure and usefulness, patrolling of police in high Security Zone and the performance and utility of the police that are playing an important role in the security.