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ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Parliamentary Committee Rana Qasim Non addressing a seminar on the occasion of the 3rd anniversary of the Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Gilani.

PM expresses satisfaction over inflation rate drop; economic stability

Says government is committed to economic reforms and we are swiftly implementing the right-sizing policy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed his satisfaction over the nosediving of inflation rate in the country and the indicators of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, showing a decline in the inflation rate. The prime minister said that 'Consumer Price Index' fell to record low in July 2024, bringing inflation to 11 percent and welcomed the economists' forecast of further decline in inflation in the current month of September. He expressed the confidence that its positive impact on the economy would be visible soon. The prime minister also acknowledged that the federal and Punjab governments had provided a big relief to the electricity consumers in respect of monthly bills, adding the prices of petroleum products were further reduced from today. The prime minister said that the government believed in passing on all the benefits of such policies to the common man. The economy was moving towards stability owing to the hard work of the government's economic and financial team, he added. He said the government was cognizant of the issues of the people and was striving day and night to resolve them.

'Dangerously delusional': Pakistan rejects India's stance on Kashmir

FO spox firmly rejects any notion that Jammu and Kashmir dispute has been or could be settled unilaterally

ISLAMABAD (INP): In response to recent comments by India's Minister for External Affairs, S Jaishankar, on Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan's Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch reiterated that the Kashmir dispute is internationally recognised and must be resolved according to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. "The Jammu and Kashmir dispute is an internationally recognised dispute that must be resolved in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. Resolution of this unresolved conflict is pivotal to peace and stability in South Asia," Baloch said on Sunday. Jaishankar, speaking on Friday, had stated, "I think the era of uninterrupted dialogue with Pakistan is over. Actions have consequences, and insofar as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, I think Article 370 is done." He further added, "The issue today is what kind of relationship can we possibly contemplate with Pakistan. What I do want to say is that we are not passive, and whether events take a positive or negative direction, either way, we will react." In her response, Baloch firmly rejected any notion that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute has been or could be settled unilaterally. "Such claims are not only misleading but dangerously delusional, as they blatantly disregard the on-ground realities. India's unilateral actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) cannot and will not change this reality," she said. Baloch emphasised that while Pakistan remains committed to diplomacy and dialogue, it will respond with resolve to any hostile actions. "True peace and stability in South Asia can only be achieved through a settlement in accordance with UNSC resolutions and the inalienable rights of the Kashmiri people," she stated. Pakistan called on India to abandon its "provocative rhetoric and baseless assertions" about IIOJK and engage in meaningful dialogue for a just and lasting resolution of the Kashmir dispute to ensure durable peace in the region.

Pakistan reports fourth Monkeypox case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Health on Sunday confirmed that a fourth case of Monkeypox has been reported from Peshawar. According to the spokesperson of the ministry, the affected person belongs to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The 47-year-old citizen was isolated on August 29 by Border Health Services staff based on symptoms, the spokesperson said. The affected person has come from the Gulf countries. National Coordinator for Health Dr Mukhtar Bharath said that an effective screening system is working at all airports. He said that Pakistan has taken effective measures to prevent Mpox. He said that the federal capital and provinces are in close coordination. He said that the government is ensuring that all the necessary steps are taken on time. He said that the Ministry of Health is regularly monitoring the situation. He said that the Ministry of Health and provincial governments are engaged in ensuring advance measures.

Gilani calls for dialogue with all political parties, including PTI

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani on Sunday called for dialogue among all political parties, including the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), emphasising the need for national unity during challenging times. Speaking to the media, the former prime minister highlighted the critical role of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, urging him to lead the talks and make decisive moves. "Shehbaz Sharif is the captain of the team and must take the necessary decisions. If he makes any decision, we will support him on national issues," Gillani stated. He underscored the importance of unity among political parties to address national security concerns, stressing that positions and offices come and go, but the nation must remain strong and united. Gillani also addressed the youth, advising them not to be misguided and reminding them that their honour is tied to Pakistan's existence. He further noted that Pakistan's status as a nuclear power is secure, with its constitution, courts, and institutions firmly in place.

PML-N 'divided' over talks with opposition

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is "divided" over talks with the opposition parties in the National Assembly. It has been learnt that PML-N leaders are not 'happy' over the statements of federal ministers and senior party leaders, Ahsan Iqbal and Khawaja Asif, as they feel putting conditions for talks, will create further 'problems'. We have to move for unconditional talks, the sources said, citing PML-N huddle. PML-N president Nawaz Sharif is also in favour of unconditional talks with the opposition parties, the sources said and added Ahsan Iqbal and Khawaja Asif's statements were supported by a key govt personality.

Syed Ali Gilani's 3rd martyrdom anniversary observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The third martyrdom anniversary of veteran Hurriyat leader and the icon of the Kashmir resistance movement, Syed Ali Gilani was observed on Sunday. Syed Ali Gilani passed away on September 1, 2021, while under house arrest at his residence in Srinagar, where he had been confined for over a decade. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has called upon people in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) to visit the Hyderpora graveyard, where Syed Ali Gilani is buried to pay their respects to him. The APHC's call has been supported by all pro-freedom organizations. The APHC has also urged imams and khateeb to conduct special prayers for the veteran pro-freedom leader and other Kashmiri martyrs in mosques. Additionally, the APHC has appealed to the Kashmiri diaspora to hold peaceful demonstrations worldwide to highlight the ongoing human rights abuses in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.



MURIDKE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif offers Fateha for late Rana Afzaal Hussain, brother of Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister.

PM condoles Rana Afzaal's death

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visited the residence of Federal Minister for Industries, Production and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, here at Muridke on Sunday. He offered condolences to the minister on the sad demise of his brother Rana Afzaal Hussain, a Member of Provincial Assembly. Shehbaz Sharif prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear the loss with patience. The PM appreciated the political services of Rana Afzaal Hussain and said that his services for welfare of people would always be remembered.

One million youths to get IT education every year: Ahsan Iqbal

LAHORE (APP): Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday said that government has planned to train youths in the IT sector through Chinese cooperation. In a statement issued here, he highlighted the contribution made by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) government, asserting, "The PML-N led governments have distributed 1 million laptops among students." "One million youngsters will get IT education every year," he added. The minister said that that the incumbent government was creating opportunities to provide digital education to people, stressing the need for increasing literacy. "We will have to boost literacy by up to 90 percent in a bid to steer the country towards prosperity," he added. The minister announced the release of the district education index report. "Schools from 124 districts of the country have scored 53 percent. The prime minister has established a task force in connection with the educational emergency," he added.



NAROWAL: Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal addressing faculty members of Narowal Medical College

Indian troops martyr seven Kashmiris in August in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indian troops in their unabated acts of state terrorism martyred seven Kashmiris in the last month of August in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). According to the data issued by the Research Section of Kashmir Media Service, today, the Kashmiris were martyred in different fake encounters while one woman was disgraced by the Indian police personnel in the territory. During the period, the personnel of Indian army, police, paramilitary, Special Investigation Agency (SIA) and National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested 96 civilians, mostly political activists, youth and students, during 186 cordon and search operations and house raids while several of them were booked under black laws, including Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and Public Safety Act (PSA). Properties, including house and lands, of the five Kashmiris were attached and eight Kashmiri Muslim employees were suspended from their government services by the New Delhi-controlled Bharatiya Janata Party regime.



LAHORE: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti visiting the residence of Shaheed Captain Muhammad Ali Qureshi and offered condolence with the bereaved family members. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan are also present

No leniency or talks with terrorists Some elements' aim to undermine Pak in name of nationalism: CM Bugti

LAHORE (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti said on Sunday that no Balochi had killed any Punjabi but terrorists killed Pakistanis. Addressing a press conference at a local hotel here he said, "Terrorists have no religion, sect or ethnicity and they should be treated as terrorist only." He said that in Baloch traditions travellers are very important and the Baloch have a lot of respect and esteem for women and children. "No Islamic or even Baloch traditions allow killing innocent human beings in front of women or children. The state is standing with oppressed people and with the family members of all those who lost their dear ones in recent terrorism incidents," he added. The Balochistan CM said that he was here to assure that no leniency would be shown to terrorists. "In the recent terrorist incidents, BLA had attacked nine places in Balochistan and hit soft targets except one which was paramilitary an installment and three Frontier Corps personnel were martyred in it. All other targets were civilians which exposed the capacity of terrorists. The Balochistan government along with law enforcement agencies will make sure that terrorists meet their logical end," he maintained. He also thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, who had visited Balochistan and an apex committee meeting was held there. "Action was taken on demands of the Balochistan government from the federal government. As the federal government has announced compensation for the martyrs, the Balochistan government will also give Rs 2 million to each family. The Balochistan government will also compensate for damaged vehicles," he added.

Pak always raises Kashmiri voice at all global forums: Amir Muqam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Engr Amir Muqam has said that considering its national duty, Pakistan has always raised its voice for Kashmiris right to self-determination at every international forum and continue to raise its voice till realisation of the Kashmiris goal of freedom. Addressing Kashmiri Diaspora in Toronto, Canada, Engr Amir Muqam said that Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif effectively advocated Kashmir dispute in his address at UN General Assembly forum and all international forums, said a press release. The participants given standing ovation to Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam on arrival to stage. They also chanted slogans Pakistan Zindabsd and PML N leadership Zindabad. He said that Pakistan and particularly present government will continue to lend its unstinted moral, political and diplomatic support to the rightful and just cause of the freedom struggle of Kashmiris. The Indian actions of 5th August 2019 a blatant violation of the UN Charter, the 4th Geneva Convention and international laws. For the last three years India had tried every tactic of oppression against the Kashmiris but their resolve and passion for freedom could not be weakened. The barbaric and brutal occupation of IIOJK by India not only violates international law, but also makes a mockery of the globally accepted norms of fundamental rights and freedoms. The international community can no longer remain silent while India continues to perpetrate its oppression in Kashmir. Despite more than seven decades of Indian occupation, including four painful years of continuous military siege and media blackout.



Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON, Engr. Amir Muqam addressing the Kashmiri diaspora in Toronto, Canada.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

In demand

Important people have been lining up outside the maulana's residence, seemingly hoping to win his favour. What gives? Pictures of the beaming JUI-F chief, arm in arm with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, were splashed across the newspapers on Saturday.

About a week earlier, President Asif Ali Zardari and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi had paid Maulana Fazlur Rehman a similar visit. In between, a delegation of senior PTI leaders, including party chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Asad Qaiser, Shibli Faraz and Raouf Hasan, knocked on the maulana's doors. A PTI leader said the maulana wanted two seats in the Senate; the prime minister promised him that all his grievances would be resolved by the government if he parted ways with the PTI. After months in the political wilderness, the maulana must be feeling good about being back in demand. After all, he was the only one left high and dry when the last election results were announced.

It seems important to outline the context. It may be recalled that these meetings started a day after the JUI-F and PTI reached an agreement on challenging the government. The PTI will be staging its first 'power show' in the federal capital next Sunday, for which it has vowed to push ahead with or without the state's permission. If the JUI-F decides to join its troops, it could become a more complex challenge to handle. Separately, the JUI-F has a significant presence in Balochistan, which was recently rocked by a series of coordinated terror attacks. The state could be planning a major counterterrorism effort there and may consider it important for the maulana to extend his backing to the state's plans. Then there are rumours that the coalition government is planning to move important legislation through parliament, in which Maulana Fazl's buy-in may make the difference between a constitutional amendment being passed or not.

This is, after all, what politics is about, and the maulana is one of the most seasoned wranglers on the national stage. His party can exert considerable street power, and he can be quite direct when criticising the state. For this reason, both factions would want him to be on their side. As long as the tug-of-war over his loyalties is confined to whether he wants to sit on the treasury benches or the opposition, the PTI and the coalition government can continue slugging it out.

However, it is hoped that the JUI-F will not become part of any scheme to amend the Constitution till the question of reserved seats is resolved by the Supreme Court. Last Tuesday, bills to amend the Constitution were sought to be tabled by a lawmaker elected on a JUI-F ticket. It is hoped that they will only be considered once parliament is fully constituted.

Tourism potential

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

At a time when tourism has emerged as a major sector of the global economy, many nations have invested heavily in the industry to contribute to their GDP and also create employment. For Pakistan, too, tourism has the potential to not only bring socioeconomic dividends, but also improve the country's image. In fact, there are very few countries in the world that can match Pakistan's combined potential for mountain, religious, heritage, and coastal tourism.

Of the many facets distinguishing Pakistan are its mighty mountains, that have attracted adventure tourists from around the world. Home to the meeting point of the Himalayas, the Karakoram, and the Hindu Kush, the northern areas of Pakistan are an authentic destination for mountain lovers. Of the 14 peaks above 8,000 metres, five are in Pakistan: K-2 (8,611m), Nanga Parbat (8,126m), Broad Peak (8,047m), Gasherbrum-I (8,068m), and Gasherbrum-II (8,035m). According to the Pakistan Tourism Development Corp-oration, Pakistan is home to 108 peaks above 7,000 metres and an equal number above 6,000 metres. This spectacular landscape is complemented by extensive glacier systems, gorgeous ridges, fabled lakes, picturesque passes, and high-altitude meadows.

The territories of Pakistan have also been the bastion of major religions. Buddhist holy places in the Gandhara region — Mardan, Taxila, Swat, and Takht-i-Bahi — attract tourists from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan etc. Eighty per cent of the Sikh religion's holy sites are situated in Pakistan, notably Nankana Sahib, Punja Sahib, and

Kartarpur Sahib. Each year, thousands of Sikh yatrees visit these gurdwaras. Likewise, several temples in the country are revered by Hindus, including Hinglaj Mata in Balochistan, Katas Raj in Chakwal, and Hanuman mandir in Karachi. The Sufi culture of Pakistan also attracts spiritual pilgrims, particularly to the shrines of Data Ganj Baksh, Baba Farid Ganj Shakar, and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

Pakistan is also the proud inheritor of great civilisations, including Mehrgarh, and Indus Valley sites at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Prof Michael Jansen, who studied and wrote about Mohenjodaro, was convinced that this site alone can change Pakistan's image from a terrorism-afflicted country to a bastion of proud heritage.

Pakistan's coastline also offers vast opportunities for tourism because of its sandy beaches, boating basins, beach huts and restaurants.

Yet, despite this evident potential, Pakistanis wonder why the country is not able to benefit from this rich national resource. In the Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 of the World Economic Forum, Pakistan ranks 101st out of 119 countries. (The US is at first place, while China is at nine, India 39 and Sri Lanka 76). Several reasons can be attributed to Pakistan's low standing in the tourism index.

Firstly, there appears to be no comprehensive national tourism policy framework. There are media reports that the PTDC has developed a five-year plan for 2024-2029 to promote international and domestic tourism, but it is not clear if this has been approved. In any policy framework, the government's role should be confined to being a legislator of policies, and facilitator,

regulator, and provider of services allied to tourism, while the private sector should be encouraged to create and manage tourist places. The prevailing provincial governance structures for tourism need to be revamped with enhanced coordination with the federal government.

Secondly, accurate statistics are not available, because of which planning is either not possible or is flawed. Thirdly, ownership of the local people for tourist sites is important. Only fun-c-tional local governments can engender community participation in preserving and maintaining this resource treasure, which has suffered from years of neglect by federal and provincial governments.

Fourthly, a tourist expects to receive visa facilitation, reliable air connections and safe road access to tourist destinations, decent transport, boarding and lodging, entertainment facilities, internet connectivity, and a safe security environment. Fifthly, nothing puts off a tourist more than the garbage around tourist sites. There should be dedicated departments in local governments to ensure cleanliness. Last but not least, there should be institutions for technical training of local tourist guides. Of late, one hears of the intent of the government to encourage tourism as a revenue-generating industry. The private sector is also taking initiatives to promote tourism. Conferences are being held all across Pakistan to evolve concrete recommendations on how best to promote the tourism industry of Pakistan. Amidst the prevailing economic crunch, we need every hand on deck to help improve the economic life of the country.

— Courtesy Dawn

Under the influence

Muna Khan

I am currently struggling to embrace the era of the influencer, especially as it enters the newsroom. This is despite me attempting to convince my previous employer to let us — a legacy media outlet — join TikTok in 2022. I knew our younger audiences were on TikTok, so I wanted to train a young journalist, armed with all the principles of journalism, to engage with new audiences there. The channel was apprehensive, I guess, because change is daunting — so we didn't move forward with it.

The next year, I returned to the classroom to find students were getting their news (read views) from influencers; many even aspired to become one themselves. I felt sort of validated, save the part where students weren't really getting balanced, even well-informed information. The news media, they told me, was lying to them. And they weren't wrong, especially on the Gaza issue, which we watched unfold in class following the Oct 7 attack. In Pakistan, however, I take exception to the term lying media, which is better suited to describe the men in charge. Journalists can't say it how it is because of censorship and boss' interests, but that doesn't make us liars.

I digress. I was talking about influencers, whose global industry was worth around \$21bn in 2023, according to Harvard Business Review. Around 300m people globally consider themselves content creators. "It is difficult to imagine an organisation or a consumer today who is exempt from contending with the realities of a world shaped by influencers," they write.

While there are a lot of problems with traditional media, there are no

safety rails in place when it comes to influencers. You name a product, and, arguably, the Kardashians and their minions are selling it. This industry is, as the report says, a place for entrepreneurship but also exploitation. The influencer industry has grown from beauty, fashion, hospitality and travel to non-profits, news and politics.

Nowhere was this more visible than the Democratic National Convention last week, where content creators jostled for space with journalists and were getting access to top Democrats, like journalists.

The party gave these influencers press-like credentials and a "front row seat to history", DNC's communication director told Reuters. Democrats understood they needed to tap into a younger audience which consumes information on social media. According to the latest figures from Pew Research, 83 per cent of adults use YouTube, 68pc use Facebook, 47pc use Instagram, and 33pc use TikTok. The mainstream media is no longer the gatekeeper of political news.

Of course, it rankled a lot of journalists who feel the press box is, well, for the press. The number of journalists at the convention was slashed and reporters say they faced restrictions in access as well. Meanwhile, content creators got a (real) platform from where they could record their videos.

While there's never been any consensus anywhere on who gets to call themselves a journalist, the way of reporting or covering events hasn't changed. Journalists work from a place of balance, whereas influencers are partisan from the get-go. They are not accountable to anyone. That is the fun-

damental difference, and if the DNC is roping in influencers to spread their message, is it because they have lost confidence in journalism or in its product; ie, their candidate?

At the time of my writing, Kamala Harris and Tim Walz were giving their first joint interview, an anomaly in itself. Harris has come under criticism for not giving an interview since becoming the presumptive candidate. There is a lot of speculation as to why: from she's avoiding scrutiny, to she doesn't think the media industry plays fair. My guess is that she would, to win (duh) and doesn't think she needs air time to get there. Maybe she's taking her cue from Joe Biden, who gave the least amount of interviews and press conferences as president since Ronald Reagan. Or she is confident her polling figures are strong enough. Whatever the reason, it hurts the media and the electorate it reports for.

To reiterate, I have no skin in this — or any country's — electoral game. What does it matter if we are bombed or sanctioned by the first Black and Indian female president? But it matters if countries take their cues from a superpower like the US and dismiss the press as an increasingly irrelevant institution that will be replaced by TikTokers. This is worrying and requires a serious re-think by media managers. They must em-b-race change, whether it is learning technological innovations, research from audience insight, or exploring new business models. I don't want officials to be answerable to in-fluencers. I want to keep asking tough questions and ensure elected officials are held to account. That is my job. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

FPCCI, Zimbabwean Embassy join hands for increasing bilateral economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and the Embassy of Zimbabwe in Islamabad joined hands for increasing the economic and trade ties between Pakistan and Zimbabwe and also reiterated for increasing the connections between the business community if both sides.

On the occasion, the Ambassador of Zimbabwe said that Zimbabwe and Pakistan had huge potential for increasing bilateral economic and trade ties and there was need to enhance the connection between the private sector of both sides.

The Ambassador said that the existing bilateral trade between Pakistan and Zimbabwe was standing at \$ 30 million in FY 2023 less than its potential, which needed increase up to \$100 million in the coming years.

He said the role of the private sector and especially the Federation Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry is significant to increase bilateral economic relations and the Zimbabwean Embassy in

Islamabad will provide full support to the exporters and traders in this regard.

The Zimbabwean envoy said that Pakistan's current export volume to Zimbabwe was \$20 million and Pakistan's imports from Zimbabwe were \$10 million, which was less than the bilateral economic and trade potential, which can be increased over time to strengthen economic ties.

He said that Zimbabwe imports from Pakistan mainly were agricultural goods including rice, tractors and other sectors like light engineering, electronics, medical equipment, sports equipment, safety tools and machinery. While Pakistan imports from Zimbabwe include chemicals.

FBR collects Rs.1,588b in Jul-Aug 2024-25

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has collected gross revenues of Rs.1,588 billion during the first two months of the current fiscal year 2024-25.

As a result a cumulative growth of almost 35 percent has been achieved in the collection of domestic taxes.

However, on the import side the same momentum could not be maintained due to continued compression in imports.

In US\$ terms, imports in the country have declined by 2.2 percent in August 2024 as compared to August 2023.

Similarly, the imports during August 2024 in PKR value also showed a decline of 7 percent as compared to August last year.

Moreover, the import of high duty items such as vehicles, home appliances, as well as miscellaneous consumer goods such as garments, fabrics, footwear etc have reduced significantly, changing the import mix.

This trend has impacted collection of Customs duties as well as other taxes collected at import stage.

Distribution centres set up in Lodhran for Kisan Cards

LODHARAN (APP): Deputy Commissioner Abdul Rauf Mahar said on Sunday that distribution centers had been set up regarding Kisan Cards across the district. Presiding over a review meeting regarding the issuance of Kisan Cards, he said the centers had been established in all three tehsils of the district. Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Syed Waseem Hassan, Principal Agriculture Officer Malik Muhammad Zafar, Deputy Director Public Relations Nauman Masood Khan, representatives from the Bank of Punjab, and Assistant Directors of Agriculture from all three tehsils attended the meeting.

The DC said that steps were being taken for the welfare of farmers under the Punjab Chief Minister's Agriculture Transformation Program. The meeting reviewed the progress of approved farmer-friendly projects initiated by the Chief Minister Punjab. It was informed that 22,516 applications for Kisan Cards.



RAWALPINDI: Divisional Superintendent Pakistan Railways Noorud Din Dawar inaugurates restoring of the service of Sir Syed Express under public-private partnership.

FTO's intervention boosts refunds to Rs 17.3 billion

LAHORE (APP): Advisor to Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr Waqar Arain has said the intervention of FTO has been particularly impactful in expediting the settlement of delayed refunds.

In last six months, a total of Rs 17,317.74 million have been refunded to aggrieved taxpayers, a significant increase compare to Rs 6,316.5 million last year. Speaking here on Sunday at awareness session with Prof Dr Amanullah Malik, Principal Punjab University Law College along with other faculty, he said the transformation in the performance of Tax Ombudsman's institution reflects a commitment to upholding taxpayer's rights and improving the efficiency of tax administration, setting a new standard for responsiveness and fairness in the processes. He said that FTO Dr Asif Mahmood Jah, had adopted proactive measures by initiating all

time high number of suo moto investigations. These investigations target systemic maladministration within federal tax administration, underscoring a strong commitment to rectify underlying issues affecting taxpayers at larger scale, he added. He said that central to this success was the expertise of a dedicated team of seasoned and experienced advisors who have played a crucial role in conducting extensive outreach activities.

DG hails 'Kissan Card' as a game changer for Punjab's farmers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General (Agricultural Information) Punjab, Naveed Asmat Kahloon Sunday announced an intensified awareness campaign to boost registration for the Kissan Card, a revolutionary initiative poised to transform the agriculture sector and improve farmers' lives.

Kissan Card initiative a resounding success, the authorities have set up registration offices in approximately 140 districts, he added.

This massive exercise aims to cover a large number of farmers, enabling them to register for the Kissan Card and reap its benefits, he said, adding that by doing so, the Punjab government is ensuring that no farmer is left behind in this revolutionary initiative.

To ensure a hassle-free experience for farmers, the authorities have implemented a smooth registration procedure for the Kissan Card.



LAHORE: People selecting and purchasing second hand toys from roadside vendor in Provincial Capital.

Trade Deficit - Embarking on a strategy to remove bottlenecks

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the nation grapples with multiple economic challenges, the present government is struggling on numerous fronts to control inflation, enhance foreign exchange reserve, boost exports and lower the burden of local and external debts.

Embarking on number a number of measures in the face of these pressing challenges, the most vital is to revitalize external trade by exploring new destinations and propel it towards a surplus, thereby fueling sustainable economic growth.

With a keen focus on diversification, the government is spearheading a multi-faceted approach to venture beyond traditional markets to tap into non-traditional ones and redefining the country's trade landscape.

Tariff rationalization, market and commodity diversification, regional trade connectivity; 'Look Africa Policy'; Free Trade Agreements and negotiations for trade agreements with various countries are hallmarks of policy shift to increase country's exports and curtail trade deficit.

In the current situation when the country is on path of economic stability, to remove the trade bottlenecks, the ruling alliance has initiated negotiations at the government level to increase regional trade with Central Asian states including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. The measures also include Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Tajikistan with high-level economic team and finalization of agreements.

Negotiations for regional economic integration and trade promotion with various regional countries, including Iran and Azerbaijan also concluded at Shanghai's Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Astana (Kazakhstan) last month.

The government has directed Pakistani missions abroad to exclusively focus on economic diplomacy to increase exports in

different regions and tap potential global markets.

Industrial productivity is important to promote our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and exports," stated Alamgir Chaudhry, Chief Executive Officer, National Productivity organization (NPO).

He said currently Pakistan's exports are facing competitiveness in global markets and this issue can be resolved by modernizing our industrial sector and upgrading human resources capital. "The NPO has started Productivity Drive to improve economic literacy in the country and promote export culture."

Currently, Pakistan has a trade excess from the

Eurasian to European Countries, for which the geographical location of the Central Asian states is significant and provision of Gwadar port for these land-locked states would expand its role in the future geo-economic world and global trade.

The government is currently working on Industrial Competitiveness through Strategic Trade Policy Framework (STPF) to enhance country's trade, for which the 'Ease of Doing Policy and Made in Pakistan' initiative are of great importance for our industry to boost exports.

Alignment of trade Policy in tandem with the macro-economic framework and other national policies.

Punjab Governor says: National duty of scholars to highlight true face of Islam, play role in inter-faith harmony

Independent Report
LAHORE: Chairman Islamic Ideological Council, Mufti Raghbir Hussain Naimi called on Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor House Lahore. In the meeting, the president of PPP Ulama Mashaikh Wing Punjab and member of Islamic Ideological Council Allama Muhammad Yusuf Awan and others were present. Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said Islam has laid emphasis on love and tolerance and by following these orders, the society can be made

a cradle of peace. He said that it is the national duty of the scholars to highlight the true face of Islam and play their role in inter-faith harmony. Governor Punjab further said that everyone should make individual and collective efforts to improve the society. Meanwhile, Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan today visited the farm house of Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain located on Narowal Road. He extended his heartfelt condolence to him over the death of his brother; Member Provincial

Assembly, Rana Afzal Hussain. Governor Punjab also offered his heartfelt condolences to Rana Ahmed Atiq Anwar, Member of National Assembly and other members of his family. He said that he equally shares the grief of the bereaved family in this time of sorrow, trouble and difficulty. On this occasion, Member National Assembly of Muslim League-N, Shaista Pervez Malik, Ali Pervez Malik, Sardar Irfan Dogar, Mohsen Shah Nawaz Ranjha, Pir Ashraf Rasool, Leader of People's Party Haji Azizur Rahman Chan, Allama Yusuf Awan and



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi addressing National Dialogue session organized by Oxford Alumni Community of Pakistan in Governor House.

CM promises realising low-income people's dream of own house

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said she will fulfill the dream of low-income people to have their own house, across the province. She was talking to Dr. Amjad Saqib, the founder and chairman of Akhut, here on Sunday. Dr. Amjad thanked the CM for her initiative of public relief in electricity bills and carrying out other important public welfare projects. The Punjab chief minister said the low-cost housing programme had been started in Punjab, and every year the scope of the project would be expanded. 'Apni Chhat,

Apna Ghar' [Own roof, own house] is the biggest programme in the history of Pakistan, she added. It would be a cheap residential project, she told Dr. Amjad. The chief minister said the main goal of the project was to provide housing to the financially weak classes. The government would give subsidies and set the easiest monthly installments, under the sustainable project, she promised. The CM said that with the implementation of the revolutionary housing project, millions of people would get a job and millions of families would be able to live a better life.

Governor Kundi issues directives to ensure women representation in syndicate, senate in universities

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, has issued directives regarding women's empowerment to ensure representation in syndicate and senate in universities through out the province. In line with the Governor's instructions, the Principal Secretary has sent a letter to all universities in the province on Sunday. The letter highlights the Governor's concern about the lack of women representation in the syndicate and senate of these universities, as mandated by the Universities Act of 2012 sections 19(7)

and 22(3A) of the Act stipulate that each university must include three women in both its syndicate and senate. However, this provision has been ignored in several universities, which is a violation of the law and contrary to the efforts towards women's empowerment. It was directed the administration universities to immediately ensure the inclusion of three women in both their syndicate and senate to guarantee equal representation and promote women's empowerment in society. Universities have been given a deadline of 15 days to comply with these

directives and issue the necessary notifications. Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, has paid tribute highlighting Syed Ali Geelani's significant role in the Kashmir liberation movement. Governor Kundi highlighted Syed Ali Geelani's struggle as an indelible chapter in the history of Kashmir. He commended Geelani's relentless efforts and affirmed that democratic forces in the self-determination movement salute Geelani's contributions.



LAHORE: Chairman Islamic Ideological Council, Mufti Raghbir Hussain Naimi called on Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor House.

Ramesh lays foundation stone of new building for Sikh pilgrims

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs and President of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora Sunday laid the foundation stone of a new building in Nankana Sahib to facilitate Sikh pilgrims. This building will include construction of 100 rooms, dedicated to accommodating and providing comfort to pilgrims visiting from around the world. The minister stated that providing better facilities for Sikh pilgrims

remains a top priority, ensuring that they could perform their religious duties in a comfortable environment. Earlier, the provincial minister also visited various Gurdwaras, including Gurdwara Lila Ram and Gurdwara Bhatti Sahib. During the visit, Sardar Ramesh Arora inaugurated the Langar Halls in these Gurdwaras. The purpose of these Langar Halls is to provide free meals to the pilgrims, which is a tradition of the Sikh religion.

CM pays tribute to Ali Geelani

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has paid glowing tribute to Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Geelani on his death anniversary. In her message, she said, "Syed Ali Geelani will forever be remembered as a symbol of enduring freedom movement. His audacious leadership in the Kashmir liberation struggle made him a figure of great concern for oppressive forces."

9 dead, 1,346 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least nine people were killed and 1,346 others injured in 1,257 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 570 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 776 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams. The data analysis showed that 694 drivers, 54 underage drivers, 161 pedestrians, and 500 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes.

Azma Bukhari says: Nawaz lifeblood, pride of nation

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari said on Sunday former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-N President Mian Nawaz Sharif "is the lifeblood, honor and pride of the nation". In response to a statement of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) main leader Asad Qaiser, she said Nawaz Sharif made Pakistan a nuclear power and put it on the road to progress, and his brother, Shehbaz Sharif, saved the country from bankruptcy, when former PTI government had pushed it into severe crises. The minister said that Maryam

Nawaz, the daughter of Nawaz Sharif, was currently serving the people of Punjab day and night as the chief minister of Punjab. She said Nawaz Sharif is a leader who talks about the country and the nation. Azma Bokhari said Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan and established governments both at the federal and provincial levels, and his brother Shehbaz Sharif was working tirelessly for the country's progress. The day was not far when Pakistan would stand on its own feet, and those dreaming of Pakistan's bankruptcy would be defeated, she added.

Family members of abducted guards protest at CM's house

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The family members of security guards of a private security company, who were abducted about 52 days ago during robbery of a cash van, held a protest demonstration in front of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's residence in Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday. The protesters demanded of the chief minister to take practical steps for immediate release of the security guards. They threatened of self-immolation if their loved ones were not recovered. They said that after the passage of 52 days of the abduction of their loved ones, they had no information about them.

Full-scale operation for sanitation in rural areas from Sept 16: Minister

SIALKOT (APP): Provincial Minister for Local Government Punjab Mian Zeeshan Rafique has said that a full-scale operation for sanitation in rural areas under the 'Suthra Punjab Programme' will start from Sept 16. He made this announcement while addressing a meeting of district administration, district council, municipal corporation/committees administrator and chief officers in the office of Deputy Commissioner Sialkot. DC Sialkot Muhammad Zulqarnain and Administrator

Municipal Corporation Sialkot Muhammad Iqbal were also present. According to the plan, door-to-door garbage collection would be done in each rural union council (UC) under the supervision of the local government department, with at least 10 sanitary workers and four loader rickshaws, who would transport garbage to the temporary garbage collection point, established in villages. From there, it would be responsibility of the district council to lift the garbage with trolleys and dump it at the dumping.

International News

Israeli forces kill 48 Gazans ahead of polio drive

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Israeli strikes on Saturday killed at least 48 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, ahead of the planned start of a polio vaccination campaign, the Palestinian health authorities said. The United Nations is due to start vaccinating some 640,000 children in the territory against polio, relying on daily eight-hour pauses in Israeli strikes in specific areas of the besieged enclave, Yousef Abu Al-Reesh, Gaza's deputy minister of health, said vaccination teams would try to get to as many areas as possible to ensure wide coverage but he said only a comprehensive ceasefire could guarantee enough children are reached. "If the international community truly wants this campaign to succeed, it should call for a ceasefire, knowing that this virus does not stop, and can reach anywhere," he told reporters at Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan

Yunis. On Saturday, medicines administered vaccines to some children at Nasser Hospital wards in a symbolic move before the official campaign begins. The campaign follows confirmation last week that a baby was partially paralyzed by the type 2 polio virus, the first such case in the territory in 25 years. WHO officials say at least 90pc children need to be vaccinated twice with four weeks between doses for the campaign to succeed, but it faces huge challenges in Gaza. On Saturday, as more than 2,000 medical and community workers prepared for the start of the campaign, medicines in Nuseirat, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, medicines said Israeli strikes killed at least 19 people, including nine members of the same family. More than 30 other people were killed in a series of strikes in other areas

of Gaza, medicines said. The Israeli military said it continued to operate in the central and southern Gaza Strip. In Khan Yunis, however, families returned to their areas after the army ended a 22-day offensive it said was aimed at preventing Hamas from regrouping. Medics said they recovered at least nine bodies from the area where the army operated. Footage showed large areas were flattened, and buildings and infrastructure destroyed. Over the last 11 months, Israel's assault on the Hamas-governed enclave has killed more than 40,600 Palestinians, according to the local health ministry. Nearly the entire Gaza population of 2.3 million has been displaced and the enclave has a hunger crisis. Israel faces genocide allegations according to the International Court of Justice ruling.



OCCUPIED WEST BANK: An Israeli bulldozer drives as a fire breaks out in a fruit market in the city of Jenin amid ongoing Israeli raids.

Death toll from Bangladesh floods rises to 59

Monitoring Desk
DHAKA: The death toll in Bangladesh from heavy rainfall and subsequent floods caused by river overflows continues to rise, with media reporting 59 deaths as of late Saturday. The Dhaka Tribune said monsoon rains have wreaked havoc across the country for nearly two weeks, severely impacting millions of lives. According to authorities, the floods have af-

ected approximately 5.5 million people in 11 districts, the majority of whom live near the Indian border. The number of fatalities has risen to 59, with 37 of them in the northeastern regions of Feni and Cumilla. Around 600 healthcare teams are on the ground in the affected areas, while over 500,000 people have been relocated to 3,403 temporary shelters as a result of the disaster.

Russia will change nuclear doctrine due to West's actions in Ukraine: official

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia will make changes to its nuclear doctrine in response to the West's actions over the conflict in Ukraine, the TASS state news agency cited Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov as saying on Sunday. Ryabkov did not say what the changes would entail. Russia's existing nuclear doctrine, set out in a decree by President Vladimir Putin in 2020.

Israel recovers bodies of six hostages in Gaza, including Goldberg-Polin

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Israel recovered the bodies of six hostages from a tunnel in southern Gaza where they were apparently killed not long before Israeli troops reached them, the military said on Sunday. "According to our initial estimation, they were brutally murdered by Hamas a short time before we reached them," military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari told reporters in a briefing. The bodies of Carmel Gat, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Eden Yerushalmi,

Alexander Lobanov, Almog Sarusi and Ori Danino had been found underground in the city of Rafah and returned to Israel, he said. "The heart of an entire nation is shattered to pieces," said President Isaac Herzog, whose post is largely ceremonial. "I embrace their families with all my heart, and apologize for failing to bring them home safely." There was no immediate comment from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is under pressure at home and abroad to reach a ceasefire deal that includes the release of remaining hostages.

Israel's Lapid calls for labour strike after hostages' bodies recovered

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid called on Sunday for a strike to shut down the country's economy in order to pressure the government to reach a deal to release the remaining hostages in the Gaza Strip. Lapid, who is also a former prime minister, called on every Israeli "whose heart was broken this morning" to join a major protest in Tel Aviv later in the day. He also called on Israel's main labor union, businesses and municipalities to go on strike.

Chinese and Philippine vessels collide at a disputed atoll and governments trade accusations

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: China and the Philippines accused each other of causing a collision between their two vessels Saturday in the latest flareup of tensions over disputed waters and maritime features in the South China Sea. In a statement posted on social media, Chinese coast guard spokesperson Liu Dejun was quoted as saying that a Philippine ship maneuvered and "deliberately collided" with a Chinese coast guard ship "in an unprofessional and dangerous manner." Philippine officials in Manila said it was their coast guard ship, the BRP Teresa Magbanua, that was rammed thrice by the Chinese coast guard without

any provocation, causing damage to the Philippine vessel. It was the second confrontation in days near Sabina Shoal, about 140 kilometers (85 miles) west of the Philippine province of Palawan, in the internationally recognized exclusive economic zone of the Philippines. The Philippine ship, the Magbanua, has been anchored in Sabina since mid-April after Manila suspected that China may construct a structure to seize the uninhabited atoll. China harbored the same suspicions and recently filed a diplomatic protest against the Philippines due to the ship's prolonged presence at the shoal.

Japan protests Chinese naval incursion following airspace violation

Monitoring Desk
TOKYO: Japan voiced "strong concern and protest" Saturday after a Chinese naval ship entered its territorial waters, days after Tokyo accused Beijing of sending a military aircraft into Japanese airspace. A Chinese naval vessel was spotted entering Japanese territorial waters near the southern Kuchinoerabu island at around 6:00 am Saturday (2100 GMT Friday) and exiting southwest of Yakushima island nearly two hours later, the defence ministry said. Following the incident, the foreign ministry "issued Japan's strong concern and protest" to China's embassy in Tokyo. The ministry took "into account the past activities of Chinese naval vessels and others in the waters around Japan, and the recent intrusion into Japan's territorial airspace by a Chinese military plane," it said late Saturday. Japan on Monday scrambled fighter jets after a two-minute incursion by

Chinese Y-9 surveillance aircraft off the Danjo Islands in the East China Sea, which Tokyo slammed as a "serious violation" of its sovereignty. China's growing economic and military clout in the Asia-Pacific region and its assertiveness in territorial disputes—most recently with the Philippines—has rattled the United States and its allies. Last week, Japan's defence ministry sought 8.5 trillion yen (\$59 billion) for the next fiscal year, its largest ever initial budget request, as part of the country's five-year, 43 trillion yen defence buildup plan through March 2028. The request includes funding for so-called standoff capabilities to strike distant targets with missiles and unmanned vehicles. It is higher than the ministry's 7.7 trillion yen initial request last year, but smaller than the actual budget of 9.4 trillion yen approved for the current fiscal year.

Zelenskiy urges US Approval of deeper strikes into Russia

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy increased pressure on the United States to let Kyiv strike military targets deep inside Russian territory after his representatives met senior U.S. officials in Washington on Saturday. Washington has provided Ukraine with more than \$50 billion worth of military aid since 2022, but has limited the use of its weapons to Ukrainian soil and defensive cross-border operations. Zelenskiy said guided aerial bombs killed six people and injured 97 in Kharkiv on Friday, with more attacks on Saturday. These could be averted only "by striking Russian military airfields, their bases, and the logistics of Russian terror." In his nightly video address, he said, "We talk

about this every day with our partners. We persuade. We argue. We persuade. He said that clearing the Ukrainian sky of Russian guided aerial bombs would be "a strong step to force Russia to seek an end to the war and a just peace." Appealing to the United States, Britain, France and Germany, he said, "We need the capabilities to truly and fully protect Ukraine and Ukrainians. We need both the permissions for long-range capabilities and our long-range shells and missiles." Without providing specifics, he said his representatives had "provided all the necessary details" to Ukraine's partners. Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, in Washington with a delegation on Friday and Saturday to meet U.S. officials and experts.

Taipei former mayor arrested in graft probe

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: A former mayor of Taipei who heads a small opposition party was arrested early on Saturday as part of a graft probe of a major property development in the Taiwanese capital. Ko Wen-je, mayor from 2014 to 2022 and who came third in January's presidential election, was arrested after investigators raided his home and party on Friday and questioned him for hours, his Taiwan People's Party said. Ko has denied wrongdoing in the case, which involves approvals given for a property project when he was mayor, telling reporters on Friday that "I know I have no problems." The TPP, in a statement on Saturday, said it "calls on the court to carefully examine the legality of the arrest procedure during the arraignment process, and to return justice to Chairman Ko Wen-je as he deserves."

Gilani calls health a fundamental right of every citizen

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Sunday highlighted the importance of health as a fundamental right of every citizen, stressing the collective responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to the knowledge and resources needed to lead a healthy life.

While addressing a celebration ceremony and health awareness seminar organized by TIENS International he extended heartfelt congratulations to TIENS International for their remarkable achievements and unwavering commitment to health and wellness. "Today's seminar is a testament to their ongoing efforts to raise health awareness and promote well-being," he said.

For over two decades, TIENS has made a profound impact on the health and entrepreneurial landscape of Pakistan.

The chairman praised TIENS' dedication to promoting Traditional Chinese Medicine and related products, which has significantly improved the lives of countless individuals.

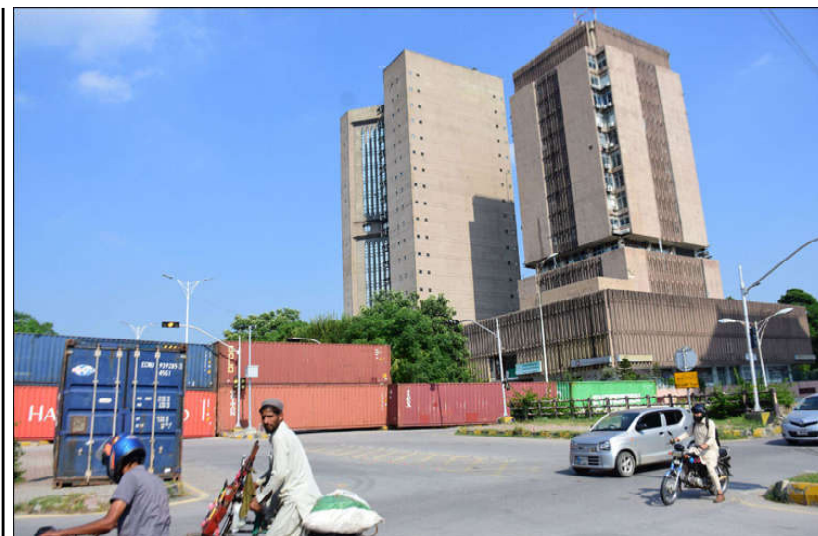
He specifically commended TIENS for addressing critical health issues such as ageing, obesity and personal care, aligning perfectly with national health objectives.

Gilani underscored the importance of health awareness in today's society, particularly in Pakistan, where the population faces numerous health challenges.

He emphasized the critical role of preventive healthcare and lauded TIENS for its efforts in promoting health awareness, which resonates with national goals of improving public health outcomes and reducing the burden of disease. He also praised TIENS for empowering individuals by providing access to reliable health information and resources, enabling them to make informed decisions about their well-being. "By preventing diseases and promoting a higher quality of life, TIENS is making a significant contribution to our society," he added.

He highlighted the importance of fostering an environment where individuals can achieve finan-

cial stability, contributing to the economic growth and prosperity of the nation. TIENS, through its innovative business models and support systems, is helping many realize their dream of financial independence. The Chairman Senate also recognized TIENS International's commitment to people development, particularly through its capacity-building and personal grooming training programs. These initiatives, he said, are instrumental in uplifting the social IQ of the youth, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the challenges of a rapidly evolving world. Reflecting on Pakistan's 77th Independence Day, Gilani urged the nation to remember the sacrifices of the forefathers and renew their commitment to building a stronger, more united Pakistan. He called all stakeholders—government, the private sector, and civil society—to collaborate in promoting health awareness and entrepreneurship, creating an environment where health education is prioritized.



ISLAMABAD: Containers being placed on Jinnah Avenue at Shaheed Millat, D-Chowk also blocked with heavy containers to secure red zone of the Federal Capital.

WB team reviews progress of HEC's flagship project for higher education

ISLAMABAD (APP): The World Bank (WB) funded Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDP) project, being executed by the Higher Education Commission, held its 10th WB supervision mission for the project in Islamabad.

HEDP is a 400 million USD flagship project of HEC aimed to support research excellence in strategic sectors of the economy, improve teaching and learning, and strengthen governance in higher education, a press release said yesterday.

Spread over a week, detailed meetings were held on each of the six components of the HEDP project to review progress, including safeguards and fiduciary aspects.

The WB team, led by Ms. Inga Afanasieva, a Senior Economist at the World Bank, held an introductory meeting with the Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed.

He assured the team that HEC is committed to successful execution of the project. The Chairman also offered HEC support for hosting the World Bank's next South Asia Regional

Cooperation event on quality assurance in Pakistan, so that neighboring countries work together to share and adopt the best practices. Executive Director HEC Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, along with the Project Coordinator Mr. Awais Ahmed chaired the kick-off meeting. The Executive Director highlighted that the project missions are important as they help track progress, document lessons learnt and work as checkpoints for the project. He said that the project targets are being closely monitored for their timely completion.



ISLAMABAD: Foreigners visits Pakistan Monument Museum.

FDE team visits ICT rural schools to assess damage caused by rain

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Director General of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), along with senior officials, visited six schools in Islamabad's rural areas on Sunday to assess the damage caused by recent heavy rains and to reinforce ongoing government initiatives to enhance educational facilities.

The delegation included the Area Education Officer (AEO) Bhara Kahu, Director (Planning & Development), Director (Coordination), and the Project Director of the Project Management Unit (PMU).

During the visit, the Director General announced a comprehensive plan for urgent repairs, committing to complete the restoration work within 10 days. This plan includes whitewashing all institutions, electrification, wash-room repairs, and the repair

of window panes. These efforts are in line with earlier inspections by Parliamentarians, reflecting the government's focused approach to uplifting rural educational institutions.

Specific tasks were assigned to the Project Director, including, the establishment of a computer lab with 40 computers at Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB) Maira Begwal, the construction of a boundary wall at Islamabad Model School for Boys (IMSB) Phulgran and the establishment of a library at Islamabad Model School for Girls (IMSG) Phulgran.

The Director General emphasized the importance of enhancing enrolment in rural schools and highlighted key initiatives by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MOFEPT).

MoFEPT announces designated routes of Pink Bus Service

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) announced designated routes of the Pink Bus Service to facilitate female students and teachers in Islamabad.

According to MoFEPT official, the program will deploy 20 pink buses to provide free transportation services for female students and teachers traveling within the capital.

The designated routes for the Pink Bus Service are as follows:

Route 1-A Nilore to F-11/1 FGCH&E&MS,

Route 1-B Nilore (Ziarat Stop to Secretariat)

Route 2-A Bhara Kahu to F-11/1 FGCH&E&MS (via F-6)

Route 2-B Bhara Kahu to F-11/1 FGCH&E&MS (via G-6)

Route 3-A Humak to Secretariat.

Route 3-B Humak to F-11/1 FGCH&E&MS.

The 20 buses, acquired for various schools and colleges in Islamabad, feature a distinctive pink design and will operate in both rural and urban areas of the city. The initiative will allow female students and teachers in the federal capital to benefit from a new, free bus service to and from educational institutions. This joint venture between MOFEPT and the district administration aims to tackle the transportation challenges faced by women in accessing educational facilities.

15 govt rural schools equipped with digital learning materials

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aiming Change for Tomorrow (ACT) International, in collaboration with Federal Directorate of Education, has equipped 15 government schools located in rural areas of Islamabad with Chromebooks and high-resolution LEDs, along with digital learning materials on Life Skills-Based Education.

This initiative represents a move towards establishing smart classrooms in public schools in ICT, particularly in rural areas, the spokesman of the Education Ministry told on Sunday.

The initiative will chance students learning outcomes.

AIOU commences spring 2024 exams

ISLAMABAD (APP): Final exams for Matric, FA, and ICom programs offered in the Spring 2024 semester by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) are set to begin today (Monday, September 2) across the country.

According to the University, the roll number slips have been uploaded to the students' CMS portals, and the date sheet is available on the university's website at www.aiou.edu.pk.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has instructed to ensure the provision of basic facilities for students at the examination centers.

On the special instructions of the Vice-Chancellor, the roll number slips for Matric and Intermediate exams have also been uploaded to the AIOU Mobile Application, which is available on the Google Play Store.

Sir Syed Express train restored under public private partnership

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Railways has restored the service of Sir Syed Express under public-private partnership. According to PR spokesperson, the first train comprising 16 coaches left for Rawalpindi from Karachi via Faisalabad on Sunday.

The train offers a variety of classes to passengers, including one AC sleeper coach, three AC business class coaches, one AC standard coach, a dining car and eight

economy class coaches. Special measures have been implemented to ensure continuous water supply and cleanliness on board, enhancing passenger comfort. Free Wi-Fi access is available throughout the journey, allowing passengers to stay connected. Tickets for Sir Syed Express could be purchased through mobile applications, allowing passengers to book their travel from the comfort of their homes.

IHC to hear the petition against stopping journalists from coverage on 10th

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Islamabad High Court will hold a hearing on September 10 on the request of the Pakistan Cricket Board against preventing journalists from covering the issue. Court remarked that if these are journalists, they have been covering the series in the past, how can their accreditation be stopped? The hearing was conducted by Justice Babar Sattar, meanwhile, senior lawyer Wahid appeared on behalf of journalists.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Committee, Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon visits corner, associated with the Syed Ali Gilani, where the belongings of the veteran Hurriyat leaders placed at Pakistan Monument Museum.

Islamabad Police to constitute special squads for action against signal violators

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police has decided to accelerate efforts to ensure implementation of traffic laws and take strict action against those involved in violation of red-signal, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police have decided to constitute special squads for

taking stern action against those violating red signals.

A special campaign is underway to check violations while various squads are performing duties at main roads and boulevards of the city and taking action against the violators. Efforts are underway to ensure a disciplined traffic system in the city.

Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk directed the Islamabad Police personnel to ensure implementation

on traffic rules and regulation irrespective of status and rank and demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users.

The Islamabad Police are utilizing all available resources to facilitate the general public. The force issues traffic violation tickets not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the capital and secure the lives of the people.

Federal Minister introduces tougher axle load enforcement & road safety measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization, and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan on Sunday has announced new measures to enforce axle load restrictions on highways and GT Roads.

According to a press release in a bid to enhance road safety and infrastructure integrity, Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization, and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan has mandated stricter enforcement of axle load restrictions on all highways, including the Grand Trunk (GT) Road.

Federal Minister chairing a joint meeting with

the National Highway Authority (NHA) and the Frontier Works Organization (FWO), Khan emphasized the importance of replicating motorway standards for heavy vehicle regulations across national roads. Minister directed that weigh stations, akin to those on motorways, be established to ensure compliance with weight limits, preventing potential damage to road infrastructure.

Additionally, Abdul Aleem Khan underscored the need for comprehensive surveillance and e-Challans to address violations such as speeding, not wearing seat belts, and mobile phone use while driving.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan, Humaira Tayab and others addressing a Press Conference under Save Gaza Campaign.

Ministry of IT working to transform Islamabad into "Model Digital City"

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal capital is poised for transformation into a "Model Digital City," aiming to integrate a broad spectrum of technological advancements for the benefit of its residents.

According to officials from the Ministry of Information Technology, Islamabad will serve as the pilot project for this initiative. This transformation aligns with the Prime Minister's vision of digitalization.

The "Model Digital City" project will enable residents to access 150 government services through a new City Super Application. This mobile app will facilitate a range of governmental and administrative services, including those from the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad Police, health services, and educational institutions. The aim is to encourage citizens to use the app for more efficient access to these services.

The app will also feature an e-parking facility, designed to streamline parking management and alleviate congestion in the city.

The project will include the installation of AI-integrated smart cameras across Islamabad. These cameras will play a vital role in monitoring street crime, enhancing security, and improving traffic management for residents and travellers alike.

Women of twin cities turning towards scooties as mode of transport

ISLAMABAD (APP): Civil society has hailed the increasing number of women turning towards scooters as a mode of transport due to their hectic routines in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Talking to APP, a scooti rider Niha Azmat, a student of National University Of Modern Languages (NUML) said that not only several students but also working women have started using their bikes and scooties.

Scooty, the name given to the smaller versions of scooters mostly painted in light colours to give a feminine touch, are

becoming popular in women for being affordable and offering speedy mobility for routine work, Ziant a working lady said in her remarks.

Mehwish, working in a private bank has said that over a few years, many women have adopted the scooty culture, gaining independence on the roads. Now, numerous companies are successfully offering scooties for girls due to the rise in demand.

Urban areas in the country already see many girls riding scooters due to their hectic routines, creating a demand for independent transportation, she added.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy machinery is being used as construction work on Club Road is underway during development work in the Federal Capital.

Islamabad's green initiatives model for other cities: Romina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environment Coordination (MoCC & EC), Romina Khurshid Alam has lauded the initiatives launched by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration for transitioning to renewable energy and vulnerability of the capital city to climate change impacts.

In a statement on Sunday, PM Coordinator said MoCC & EC had proposed to ICT administration a unique AI based solution to improve air quality of the city to make it model environmentally-sustainable and climate-smart city of the world. "Currently, the air quality

of Islamabad is higher than interim WHO permissible limits, and the problem is getting worse because various reasons including increasing levels of emissions from gasoline and diesel-fueled vehicles", she highlighted.

The PM's climate aide Ms Alam said the proposed solution under the transition to green energy involving promotion and adoption of electric vehicles and promotion of urban forestry would not only enhance air quality in the capital city but also reduces the associated health risks and attracts more international tourists as well.

She said various policies and initiatives such as the electric

bus service, climate change fund (CCF), Margalla Hills Fund (MHF) and Carbon Credit Programme (CCP) have been already introduced for ICT to enhance climate resilience and environmental sustainability of Islamabad and its periphery areas.

Appreciating these initiatives, Romina Khurshid emphasised the importance of collective efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change being faced by the capital city.

"These measures are setting a pioneering example in climate action, promising a greener and more sustainable future for the residents of the capital city and the adjoin-

ing areas", Ms Alam highlighted.

She acknowledged that the recently launched electric bus service in ICT is a significant step towards addressing environmental concerns, adding: "These buses emit no pollutants, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and noise pollution compared to traditional diesel-powered buses".

Referring to different studies, she noted electric buses can be 2.5 times cleaner in terms of lifecycle emissions than diesel buses. She said the CCF, the first of its kind project, will contribute to address environmental concerns in ICT region. Referring to CCP as part of the

climate change initiative, the Prime Minister's aide Romina Khurshid said under this project 4 to 5 million trees would be planted over 2000-10,000 kanals all over the capital city.

Romina said allocation of 1.5 per cent of revenue generated from recreational spots in margalla hills under MHF would be ensured to protect and conserve natural resources of the Margalla Hills National Park. The PM's aide urged the administration of other cities to follow Islamabad's model for climate action in the cities, prioritising use of renewable energy, adoption of electric vehicles.



ISLAMABAD: Rawal Dam authorities open spillway of the reservoir after dam water level rose to alarming level due to heavy rain.