

Decision to provide VIP security to Maryam Nawaz

ISLAMABAD: VIP security will be provided to Maryam Nawaz, vice president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), decision made on Wednesday. According to the source, decision taken place on the recommendation of threat assessment committee. Ranger, along with the police, will also provide security to Maryam. Source told that rangers and federal police will provide security to Maryam in Islamabad, while relevant police fulfill the responsibilities in other provincial districts. —APP

The Business

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Ishaq Dar vows to put minimum burden on masses

LONDON: Former Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said on Wednesday inflation will be sky rocketing if the government opts to put burden on masses. "People of Pakistan have coped with worst inflation during previous government's tenure," Dar said while talking to reporters in London, adding that the incumbent coalition government will decide to minimize the inflation through a mutual strategy. Dar said previous PTI-led government had gained power through 'unconstitutional means' but it was ousted through legal and constitutional pro-

IHC sends plea against social media rules to parliament

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday forwarded the petitions against the social media rules to the Parliament. The high court today heard petitions against the social media rules devised by the former government. "The government has changed and those who were in the opposition previously and were opposed to these rules, are now in power," Chief Justice Athar Minallah remarked during hearing of the case. "Isn't it be better for the government to consult with stakeholders and settle the issue," Justice Minallah questioned. "The court always thinks it appropriate that the government in power look into the matter and settle it," the chief justice observed. "Respecting freedom of expression is necessary, the court sees what is happening to the freedom of expression," chief justice IHC observed. "Everything should be clear in the rules, nothing can be left open ended that can be misused tomorrow," the chief justice said. —DNA

ATC acquits MQM-P leader Amir Khan

KARACHI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Wednesday acquitted senior Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) leaders Amir Khan, Minhaj Qazi and others in a case related to providing shelter to terrorists at Nine Zero, a former headquarters of MQM.

The accused were set free in the case over insufficient proof. The MQM-P leaders were booked at Azizabad police station for giving alleged shelter to terrorists. Back in 2015, the MQM leader was taken into custody by the Rangers in a pre-dawn raid on the party headquarters Nine Zero in Azizabad. Subsequently, he was placed under preventive detention for 90 days for questioning.

According to the FIR registered at Azizabad police station, Khan, who was in charge of the party headquarters security at that time, with Minhaj Qazi, Raees Mama, Naeem, Aijaz Niazi, Shahzad Mullah and others had allegedly provided shelter to criminals and had been using them for terrorist activities in the city.

Mama and other absconding accused had been declared as proclaimed offenders. PPP leader Dr Asim Hussain, a close aide of former president Asif Ali Zardari, is too facing similar charges. —DNA

Vawda files reference against ECP member

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf leader Faisal Vawda has submitted a reference against a member of Election Commission of Pakistan to the Supreme Judicial Council. Reportedly, PTI leader Vawda filed a reference in the Supreme Judicial Council on Wednesday against the ECP member from Sindh, Nisar Durrani. The reference was submitted under Article 209.

It has been alleged in the reference that the ECP member Nisar Durrani committed misconduct. —DNA

Hamza, Khurshid discuss water issue

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz held a telephonic contact with the Federal Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshid Shah in which matters relating to shortage of water and water supply across Punjab especially to South Punjab came under discussion.

The Chief Minister demanded the provision of water supply to Punjab according to its allocated quota and emphasised that water be provided to Punjab with the same proportion in which it is provided to the other provinces. Hamza Shahbaz underscored that the whole country is facing shortage of water and we have to cope with this problem jointly.

Hamza maintained that with the grace of Allah Almighty and formulating a joint strategy will help to overcome the situation being created due to water shortage and also apprised Khurshid Shah about the latest situa-



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz being given briefing about the Safe City Project.

Wheat procurement target would be achieved by June end

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed Wednesday that wheat procurement target set for the current season will be achieved by the end of June.

Minister for Commerce Naveed Qamar told the House during question hour that the country is self-sufficient in wheat production but over the last two years, a shortfall has been witnessed due to various factors including non-availability of timely fertilizers to the farmers, climate change and shortage of water. He said government has decided to import three million metric tons of wheat to meet domestic requirements. He said it has also been decided to take firm action against hoarding and smuggling of the commodity.

The Minister for Commerce said modern silos will be established to ensure better preservation of wheat. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi regretted delay in completion of New Balakot city. He said thirty percent work on the project has been completed. He said responsibility rests with the provincial

government to complete the remaining seventy percent work. Responding to the points of opposition members, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar clarified that a legal and constitutional procedure was followed to remove the Governor Punjab.

He said it is a parliamentary democracy and the President is bound to follow the advice of the Prime Minister under the constitution. Attorney General of Pakistan Ashtar Ausaf Ali also echoed the remarks of the Law Minister saying there are also decisions of courts on the matter.

The house adopted a resolution stressing that obedience to the Constitution is obligatory on every citizen. The resolution moved by Mohsin Dawar said the president is bound to protect and defend the constitution. It called upon the President to act in a non-partisan manner as per the constitution.

Fehida Mirza of GDA said all the institutions including the judiciary, the armed forces and the presidency should be respected. The House will now meet today (Thursday) at 11 am.

Privatization deals worth Rs 4.293b conducted in last 4 years: NA told

Minister for Privatization Abid Hussain Bhayo on Wednesday informed the National Assembly that privatization transactions worth Rs 4.293 billion have been conducted during August 2018 to April 2022. Replying to a question during Question Hour, the minister said expenditures of Rs 78.81 million were incurred for the said privatization.

He said 10 properties, Services International Hotel, Lahore and Heavy Electrical Complex. The said privatizations were conducted through competitive bidding process, as per the provisions of the Privatization Commission Ordinance, 2000, he said.

The minister said the benchmark (reference) prices of all the said privatizations were assessed through a laid down process. The reference prices of the said properties were conducted by the respective Financial Advisors on the basis of international and domestic standards of conducting valuation, he said. —APP

FPCCI chief for repeal of CNIC condition on buyers

KARACHI: President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Irfan Iqbal Sheikh has called for repeal of CNIC condition for a buyer while doing transaction and said that this condition needs to be withdrawn in the upcoming Federal Budget 2022-23 and the Finance Act 2022 for being counterproductive as it has failed to generate more taxes rather than encouraging the use of flying invoices and fake documentation.

In his statement issued by the FPCCI here Wednesday, the FPCCI President said that nowhere in the world a buyer was being asked to submit their CNIC while making a purchase. He was of the view that introduction of CNIC condition was merely a part of political sloganeering at the cost of the national economy. The FPCCI has also briefed Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Miftah Ismail on the issue and about its negative impact on commercial activities in the country, he said and added that it negatively affected the production and market sales of the businesses in Pakistan. He claimed that the Chairman FBR during his visit to FPCCI few months back, conceded that as result of CNIC condition, there had been a drop in Sales Tax collection.

The President FPCCI pleaded that the

only workable solution to generate more taxes was to present a business-friendly and pro-growth budget in consultation with the representative bodies of trade and industry especially FPCCI, which was the apex business forum of the country.

Irfan Iqbal Sheikh reiterated that as President of the apex trade body, he was playing his mandated role of building bridges and promoting cooperation between the business community and the government and its regulators from the FPCCI platform.

ICCI demands urgent power sector reforms for EDB

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday urged the government to take urgent measures to bring drastic reforms in power sector in order to reduce the production cost and promote ease of doing business.

In a press statement, President ICCI Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that electricity was playing vital role in the economic development of a country, but the rising circular debt, surging transmission and distribution losses and poor performance of power companies was taking a heavy toll on the business and economic activities. He said that the circular debt was more than doubled in the last four years exceeding Rs.2.4 trillion, which reflected the bad governance in the power sector. This

situation has increased the energy cost for domestic and commercial consumers as the electricity cost has gone up by almost 100 percent over the last 4 years.

He said that growing at the current rate, the circular debt was estimated to reach Rs.4 trillion by 2025, which would badly affect the economic growth of the country.

The ICCI President said that according to a research report of Pakistan Credit Rating Agency (PACRA), the average transmission and distribution losses of Discos and KE were recorded at 21 percent and 20 percent respectively in financial year 2020, which showed the poor performance of these companies as rising T&D losses are causing great financial losses to the national exchequer. He urged the government to take urgent measures to control T&D losses and promote efficiency in the power companies to save the economy from further losses.

Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh, Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan, Vice President ICCI stressed also urged the government for focusing on reducing the commercial and technical losses of power companies, disconnect the power connections of those consumers who do not pay bills and upgrade the transmission and distribution infrastructure to reduce losses and facilitate the better growth of

Govt to focus on youth in Budget 2022-23: Ahsan

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal Wednesday said the government was giving special priority to the youth of the country in the incoming budget for fiscal year 2022-23, as number of new initiatives were being considered for them. He said in the upcoming budget, the government would introduce multiple skills training projects for the youth to enable them earn their livelihoods besides contributing to the country's productivity.

Addressing media here, the minister said the budget would enable youth to get more employment opportunities in the upcoming fiscal year. He said in the next budget the government would also give special focus on the education sector and will increase fund allocation for the higher education. Projects of sports and recreational activities would also be introduced in the upcoming budget, the minister added.

With respect to the flagship project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Ahsan Iqbal regretted that the project was ignored during four years of previous government, as not a single review meeting on the project was held after the Joint Coordination Committee between Pakistan and China in September 2021. He said the PML-N government used to hold fortnightly review meeting on CPEC projects and now this routine was being resumed to expedite work on the projects under CPEC.

Iqbal shared that he had met with representatives of many Chinese companies working in Pakistan, who had complained of many unresolved issues. The minister said that he assured them of resolving their issues on priority.

Summer vacation in Punjab schools from June 1

The Business Report

LAHORE: The Punjab education department on Wednesday finalised the summer vacation schedule for all public and private educational institutions.

According to Punjab School Education Department, the summer vacation in schools and other educational institutions will begin from June 1 till July 31. The new academic year 2022-23 will start from August 1, according to the Education Department. Similarly, the examinations of classes 1-8 will begin in May and results would be announced before May 31. Recently, the Sindh Education Department also announced to start the new academic year 2022-23 from August 1.

It was also agreed to hold annual examinations of elementary classes (grade 4-8) from May 2 while the matriculation examinations will begin from May 17. The results of the examinations will be announced on July 17. The intermediate examinations will begin from June 15 while the Higher Secondary Schools (HSC) will open admissions from July 1 to 31. The examination papers will consist of 40% MCQs and 60% of detailed questions, the Sindh education steering committee announced. —DNA

Propaganda will not be allowed in ties with Pak: US

WASHINGTON: The United States (US) has said it will not allow falsehood and propaganda to come on the way of bilateral relations with Pakistan. The US while rejecting PTI chairman Imran Khan allegations said Imran Khan allegations are based on propaganda, disinformation and falsehood.

Responding to media questions during press briefing in Washington, State Department spokesman, Ned Price refuted former premier's Imran Khan's allegations saying the US attaches importance to its bilateral relations with Pakistan. Falsehood, disinformation and propaganda will not be allowed to come on the way of its bilateral relations with Pakistan.

US does not support one political party over another in Pakistan, but instead supports the principles of rule of law.

Recalling US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meeting with new Pakistani counterpart last week, Ned Price said they reflected on the 75th anniversary of US- Pakistani relations and to talk about how to strengthen that cooperation, going forward. —Online

Ministry receives 14,247 Hajj applications in 2 days

ISLAMABAD: The process of submitting applications for government Hajj scheme through banks is underway and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has received 14,247 Hajj applications through banks in two days.

Joint Secretary Hajj Usman Sarosh Alvi in a statement on Wednesday said Hajj applications would be received till May 13. He informed that Hajj application must be accompanied by passport, health certificate, Saudi approved vaccine certificate, token amount of Rs 50,000.

He said Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah had not provided the details of mandatory Hajj expenses yet. The overall Hajj expenses

would be announced only after receiving details of mandatory Hajj expenses from the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, he added.

Earlier, talking to this agency, the Religious Affairs Ministry's Spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt said the ministry had relaxed some rules in a bid to facilitate the Hajj pilgrims at the maximum level.

He said the rules were relaxed in the specific cases on the strong insistence of the pilgrims.

He said the pilgrims whose passports were not valid till January 5, 2023 could also submit Hajj applications on the tokens provided by the Passport Office for their passports' renewal, provided they must submit the new passports by May

18, 2022. Otherwise, it would be considered a failure, he added.

He further said other applicants were required to submit their passports along with the Hajj applications in designated branches of the schedule banks.

Umar Butt said the overseas Pakistanis could also apply for Hajj on the photocopies of passports and National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis valid till January 5, 2023, provided that they must send a request for booking in the last Hajj flights to the ministry through their banks and take full responsibility if their visas were declined in case of late submission of the passports. It was mandatory for them to provide their original passports before Zul



ON BOARD PLANE: Federal Minister Miftah Ismail, Information Minister Murriyum Aurangzeb, Railway Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique and others during their flight to London.