

# Independent

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## Sindh Cabinet approves wheat procurement target of 900,000 tons

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over the first meeting of his new cabinet on Wednesday which decided a wheat procurement target of 900,000 tons for Rs 4,000 per 40 kg.

The cabinet expressed its reservations about the appointment of the Chairman of the Indus Rivers System Authority (IRSA).

The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by provincial ministers including Sharjeel Memon, Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Nasir Shah, Sardar Shah, Saeed Ghani, Jam Khan Shoro, Zia Lanjar, Muhammad Bux Mahar, Haji Ali Hassan Zardari, Zulfiqar Shah, Advisors- Babal Khan Bahyo, Ehsan Mazari, Najmi Alam, Advisors, new Chief Sec-

retary Asif Hyder Shah, Advocate General, Prosecutor General, and others.

The Cabinet believed that the chairman of IRSA should be selected from among the members of the provinces or the federal government. No one from outside could be appointed as chairman of IRSA.

Minister Food Jam Khan Shoro told the meeting a stock of 400,000 tons of wheat is available with the department. He suggested that the department has 800,000 bags of bardana/sacks, therefore the wheat target may be fixed at 800,000.

The department after deliberations and discussions decided to fix a target of 900,000 tons of wheat to be procured for the crop 2023-24 at a support price of Rs 4000 per 40 kg.

The CM directed the food department to procure 100,000 bags/ bardana and mobilise food department teams to start procurement of the wheat at the earliest.

Commissioner Karachi Saleem Rajput briefed the cabinet on the initiative taken to control prices of edible items, particularly during the holy month of Ramzan, said that the district administration was conducting raids to control prices.

The district administration from March 6, 2024, onwards conducted 1500 raids, registered 1,150 cases, sealed 14 shops, and recovered Rs7.14 million fine.

The chief minister directed his cabinet members to start conducting surprise visits to the markets to control the prices.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori taking oath from Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah as a Provincial Minister. Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah is also present.

## Bilawal greets nation on Punjab Culture Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended his warmest greetings to the nation, especially to the proud sons and daughters of Punjab, on the auspicious occasion of Punjab Culture Day, which will be observed on March 14. According to the press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, he said that the culture of Punjab is a vibrant symphony of colors, flavors, and melodies that resonate across the 'Land of Five Rivers'.

"I commend the people of Punjab, renowned throughout history

for their hard work, bravery, and generosity. Today, let us collectively reaffirm our commitment to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of Punjab," he added.

Bilawal Bhutto said that the Punjab culture, alongside the diverse cultures of other regions within Pakistan, collectively forms the living, breathing essence of our national identity, transcending mere customs and rituals. "Let us cherish and nurture the diversity that defines us as a nation, and let us continue to embrace the cultural tapestry that binds us together as one," he urged.



KARACHI: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President, Haleem Adil Sheikh talking to media persons, at Sindh High Court in Karachi.

## Nasir Shah for expediting work on ongoing energy projects

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Energy Minister, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Wednesday, directed to expedite all the ongoing projects of the ministry so that their benefits could be transferred to the people at the earliest.

The minister, while presiding over the orientation meeting of the Sindh Energy Department, instructed officers concerned to chalk out on war footing a plan for the provision of 300 units of electricity free of cost to people as per the manifesto of PPP's incumbent provincial government.

The provincial minister also directed that special attention should be paid to quality and merit in all the projects.

Sindh Secretary Energy Department, Mussadiq Ahmad Khan, informed the meeting that

15.3 million tons of coal was being extracted annually from Thar coal blocks I and II while 3,300 megawatts of electricity was being provided to the national grid from Thar coal power projects.

The meeting was informed that a 105 km railway track will be laid from Islamkot to Chore to facilitate the utilization of Thar coal for further industrial purposes.

The meeting was informed that 1,845 megawatts of electricity are being generated from the wind power project while 36 power plants of 150 megawatts have been completed.

With the support of the World Bank, 3 solar power projects of 400 megawatts are being fast-tracked and electricity generated by them will be added to the grid system.

## Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah sworn-in as minister

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori administered the oath to Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah as the minister in a simple swearing-in ceremony at the Governor's House here.

Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, provincial ministers, Chief Secretary Sindh, secretaries of various departments and other high officials participated in the ceremony, said a statement on Wednesday.

## PM summons SIFC Apex Committee today

ISLAMABAD (INP): A meeting of the apex committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been called under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday.

According to the details, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir will also attend the Apex Committee meeting.

Apart from this, former caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and caretaker Cabinet have also been invited to the meeting.

## Earthquake jolts KP and Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): An earthquake of 5.3 magnitude on the Richter scale jolted various parts of the country on Wednesday.

According to a private news channel, the National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC) confirmed that tremors were felt in various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the federal capital, and the adjoining areas.

Earthquake tremors occurred in the Upper and Lower Dir, Mohmand, Buner, Orakzai and Abbottabad areas of KP.

Earthquake tremors also occurred in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

According to NSMC Islamabad, the epicenter was in the Hindu Kush region, and the depth was 130 km. As of now, there have been no reports of loss of life or damage to property.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## PTI, PML-N break ice as Gandapur calls on Shahbaz PM assures of resolution of KP's feasible demands

CM Gandapur hails positive meeting with PM, Stresses political engagement to solve political issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday assured that all justified demands of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province would be met while keeping in view the current financial situation of the country. Welcoming Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, the prime minister said that all the four provinces were the components of the federation and when they moved together, the country achieved progress and development.

The chief minister who called on the prime minister also briefed him on the administrative affairs of the province in detail. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar, Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal,

Minister for States and Frontier Regions Amir Muqam and other relevant senior officials. The prime minister stressed to sit together to resolve all issues, adding the public welfare would be the top priority of their collective efforts. The federal government believed in working in harmony with all the provincial governments including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and would foster the strong bonds.

The chief minister also expressed the resolve that the provincial government wanted to move with good intentions and was committed to play its positive role in the national development. Meanwhile Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur on Wednesday expressed satisfaction following his first meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, highlighting its posi-

tive tone and focus on addressing public and provincial concerns.

Addressing a joint press conference with federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal and federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Amir Muqam, Gandapur emphasized the importance of cooperation between the federal and the provincial governments in delivering solutions to a number of pressing issues. Following is a recap of the significant discussions and outcomes of the meeting. Chief Minister Gandapur underscored the constructive dialogue with PM Shehbaz Sharif, emphasizing their discussions on matters ranging from law and order to public welfare. The CM lauded the PM's commitment in providing full support and fulfilling promises made, signaling a collaborative approach to ensure good-governance.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal chaired a meeting to bring major reforms in Planning Commission on March 13. The meeting was attended by the Secretary Planning Ministry and Members Planning Commission.

## Peace, security not to be compromised under any circumstances: Law Minister

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Home, Law, and Parliamentary Affairs, Zia ul Hassan Lanjar Wednesday affirmed that peace and security will not be compromised under any circumstances.

"We anticipate a significant change in this regard, and I am thankful to those who have entrusted me with their confidence," he said this while talking to media at Sindh Assembly.

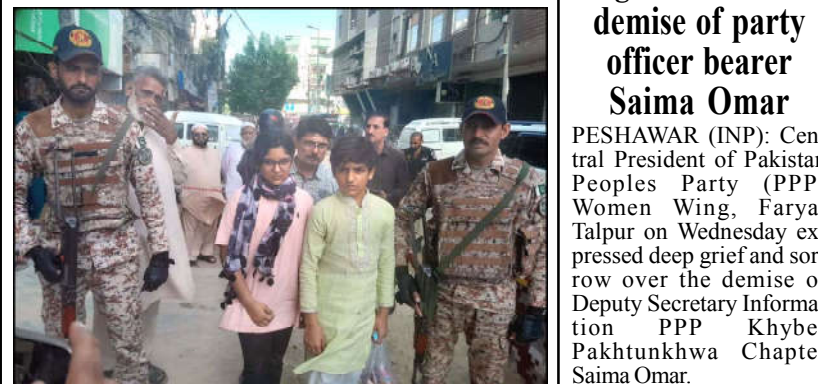
He said, "My foremost priority is to establish peace and maintain law and order throughout the province, from Karachi to Kashmir. Those involved in street crimes in Karachi will face strict repercussions, especially those who resort to violence over trivial matters."

Lanjar said qualified

and reputable police officers will be appointed, and with the cooperation of the public, we will ensure peace and maintain control over the prevailing situation across the province, including Karachi.

Prior to this, Zia ul Hassan Lanjar, held an introductory meeting with officers in the Department of Home government of Sindh.

The Secretary of Home Affairs, IG Sindh Police, and other officials were present. Additionally, he chaired a meeting on law and order, where detailed briefings were provided by the Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs of Sindh, Secretary Law and IG Sindh Police regarding the current situation.



KARACHI: Sindh Rangers officials show recovered missing young siblings Ayan and Anabiya, who missing from North Nazimabad area, to media persons during press conference, in Karachi.

## Asifa to 'contest' by-election from NA-207

ISLAMABAD (INP): The late prime minister Benazir Bhutto's daughter, Asifa Bhutto, will contest the by-election from National Assembly Constituency NA-207, Nawabshah.

The NA-207, Nawabshah, seat was vacated by PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, after taking oath as country's president for the second time in history. The constituency for Asifa Bhutto was selected after consultation with the family. Asifa Bhutto Zardari will be the PPP's candidate for the by-polls on the NA-207 seat.

Earlier it was reported that Asifa Bhutto Zardari would likely contest a by-election on NA-196, a seat vacated by her brother Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

## Faryal Talpur grieved over demise of party officer bearer Saima Omar

PESHAWAR (INP): Central President of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Women Wing, Faryal Talpur on Wednesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of Deputy Secretary Information PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter Saima Omar.

In a statement issued here, she said that the sudden death of Saima Omar has grieved all cadres of the party.

## Sindh Governor upholds Chairman Inter Board's punishment for sexual harassment

KARACHI (INP): Governor Sindh Kamran Tesori has declined an appeal against the punishment of Chairman Inter Board involved in sexual harassment, reaffirming the seriousness with which such cases are being handled in the province.

According to a spokesperson, Naseem Memon, the Chairman Inter Board, had sought clemency from the Governor to overturn the sentence imposed on him. However, Governor Sindh has ordered an inquiry into the matter while upholding the original decision, reflecting a commitment to justice and accountability.

Despite the confirma-

tion of the sentence by the Governor, Chairman Inter Board Naseem Memon insisted to hold his position. This decision follows a previous ruling by the provincial ombudsman, who had sentenced Memon to dismissal and imposed a fine for his involvement in harassing a female teacher. The caretaker chief minister had subsequently dismissed Memon from the Larkana board based on the ombudsman's decision.

The Governor's stance underscores the unwavering resolve of Sindh's authorities to address instances of sexual harassment and ensure accountability for such misconduct.



RAWALPINDI: General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Commander Bahrain National Guard, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters.

## Commander Bahrain National Guard, CJCSC discuss matters of security, defence cooperation

RAWALPINDI: Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa called on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, here at Joint Staff Headquarters on Wednesday.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), during the meeting matters of bilateral professional interest and further strengthening of security and defence cooperation between the two countries were discussed. Both sides reiterated the resolve to further strengthen security and defence cooperation between the two brotherly countries. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary.

Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi and the foreign secretary also attended the meeting.

## PM reaffirms to ensure timely implementation of CPEC initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday emphasised that his government would work tirelessly to ensure timely implementation of the initiatives under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He stressed that Pakistan was keen to move to the next phase of CPEC, including operationalisation of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to facilitate Chinese investment in Pakistan.

The prime minister was talking to Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zaidong who called on him at the Prime Minister's House, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Ambassador Jiang Zaidong calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## PTI conspiring against Pakistan by giving a false narrative to the European Union: Tarar

PTI spokespersons receiving instructions from jail to harm Pakistan: Information Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar on Wednesday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was conspiring against Pakistan by giving a false narrative to the European Union.

"The spokespersons of PTI are getting instructions from jail to harm the country, but no one will be allowed to harm the

economy," he said while addressing his maiden press conference after assuming charge as Minister for Information and Broadcasting here. Lashing out at the PTI leadership, the minister said its conspiratorial elements were again trying to attack the country's economy as in the past too, PTI did a heinous act by writing a letter to the International Monetary Fund.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Political faults

Constructive politics goes beyond mere agitation and protest. Unfortunately, over the past decade or so, all of Pakistan's major political parties have demonstrated a disappointing lack of vision with which they could inspire the people of this country.

Admittedly, this is not entirely our politicians' fault: incessant interference in the democratic process has upended the rules of politics, making it so that political parties see a greater incentive in winning the favour of those pulling the strings than in putting effort into generating good ideas for public welfare that can be backed by popular support.

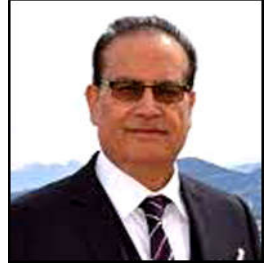
Considering how long this disequilibrium has been allowed to persist, it is no surprise that modern politicking in Pakistan has been reduced to 'us vs them' fights based on divisive narratives, referring to rivals with insulting epithets, rabble-rousing over moral panic situations, and accusing the competition of corruption.

The PTI is often accused by its critics of triggering this decline, and not without reason. The party was initially nurtured by the establishment as a counterweight to the PML-N and PPP, and it seized power by constantly attacking and delegitimising its peers. It was fed with so much confidence that it came to believe it was above the rules of politics. It sought to tear down the fragile structure of Pakistan's fledgling democracy, perhaps aspiring to build it anew.

However, it came up short in terms of capability. By the time its crutches were taken away, the party had grown too accustomed to confrontation. It fought for survival using the same self-righteous anger it had once been encouraged to use against its rivals — only this time, it was turned on those who had been nurturing it.

In the recent elections, the party managed to achieve the unthinkable. Its credentials and mandate can no longer be denied — it is now an entity that doesn't need any external support. However, the manner in which it has wielded power in the past still gives many cause for concern. Its quick successes seem to have engendered a youthful hubris that sees it get carried away when the situation requires patience. Its supporters don't realise that change is a process, not an event. Their angry campaigns on social media only reinforce their image as a volatile crowd. In this context, the party's recent announcement of a shadow cabinet to oversee the Punjab government is an encouraging sign. It indicates that the party is maturing politically. It must do more. Another good step would be to start talking to other political parties.

The PTI should know that it is welcome as a disruptive force in the political landscape as long as it can make a distinction between disruption and outright destruction. It must learn to wield its influence responsibly.



By Qamar Bashir  
Press Secretary to the President (Rtd); Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC

On the occasion of the World Day Against Cyber Censorship, celebrated globally on March 12<sup>th</sup>, the Paris-based media watchdog, Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), unveiled the launch of Operation Collateral Freedom (OCF). This initiative empowers over 100 media outlets in 32 countries to bypass censorship, marking a 20% increase from the previous year. Operation Collateral Freedom achieves this by creating mirror sites of blocked websites, ensuring constant synchronization with the originals and placing them in various online locations.

OCF helps the journalists to adapt to the evolution in censorship techniques, provides the media with IT resources through the Collateral Freedom app since August 2023, which allows them to mirror sites hosted on the online infrastructure used by RSF. So far 480 mirror sites on RSF's servers are currently enabling access to 100 censored media outlets.

Pakistani journalists grappling with censorship and social media restrictions have an opportunity to benefit from RSF's Operation Collateral Freedom. Through this initiative, RSF creates mirror sites of blocked media outlets, providing users ac-

cess to content otherwise censored. Journalists can request their websites be mirrored and utilize the Collateral Freedom app for technical support, ensuring their content remains accessible despite censorship attempts. By staying informed about RSF's efforts, collaborating with international partners, and advocating for press freedom, Pakistani journalists can effectively combat online censorship and ensure their voices are heard.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has consistently voiced concerns regarding restrictions, both official and unofficial, on press and media freedom in Pakistan. In an open letter to Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on March 4<sup>th</sup>, RSF urged the new government to take immediate steps to restore press freedom, significantly weakened in recent years. RSF highlighted that the 2024 electoral process witnessed a notable surge in violations against media freedom, emphasizing the critical need for prompt and effective measures to address these issues. RSF condemns the arbitrary shutdowns of the Internet and mobile services, as well as the blocking of social media platforms for political purposes, deeming such actions unacceptable in a democratic society and urged the government to provide an assurance that it will refrain from resorting to these authoritarian measures, which undermine freedom of expression and access to information.

RSF's assessment underscores Pakistan's standing in media freedom, ranking 150<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries. Shockingly, between 2012 and 2022, 53 journalists lost their lives in Pakistan, with convictions secured for only 4% of these cases. RSF highlights various forms of media coercion in Pakistan, including military interference, journalist abductions by intelligence agencies, legislative misuse to muzzle journalists, arbitrary Internet shutdowns, and draconian media laws. The lackluster investigations into these crimes perpetuate impunity, denying justice to victims. RSF emphasizes the urgent need for strengthened legislation to combat impunity and ensure respect for the rule of law, particularly concerning criminal activities by security services deemed "troublesome," such as abductions, secret detentions, and torture.

RSF underscores Pakistan's status as one of the most perilous environments for journalists, marked by extensive censorship and self-censorship. Urgently, RSF calls upon the new government to address this critical issue and honor commitments made by political parties during the electoral campaign. These include establishing a Safety and Security Commission for journalists, as pledged by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and revising the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, as promised by

the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). RSF urges the government to combat harassment against women journalists, enforce laws protecting journalists from undue influence or intimidation. RSF challenges the government to review several laws that encroach upon press and media freedom, including certain clauses of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance 2023 (PEMRA Amendment Act). These amendments purportedly combat disinformation but risk enabling media censorship. RSF insists on precise definitions for terms like "authentic information" and "disinformation" to prevent license withdrawal or outlet suspension. The Official Secrets Amendment Act (2023) requires revision to prevent its misuse against journalists. Additionally, Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016, known as "PECA," is currently utilized to censor social media criticism and must be revised to safeguard online freedom of expression.

In his inaugural address to the newly sworn-in cabinet, the Prime Minister rightly underscored trade and investment as critical areas for uplifting the beleaguered state of the economy. However, while emphasizing hard work as the primary pathway to achieving economic progress, it's imperative to recognize that the perception of a country's brand value plays a pivotal role in attracting favorable trade and investment.

Investors and trade partners seek stability, transparency, and reliability, qualities that can only be fostered through genuine institutional reforms and unwavering commitment to democratic values which include freedom of press and media. Therefore, it's paramount for the government to prioritize these foundational pillars of governance to pave the way for sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

Regrettably, the current brand image of Pakistan languishes at its lowest, trailing behind many regional counterparts and only marginally above war-torn nations. This dismal performance extends across various international indices and rankings, spanning from soft power and economic indicators to rule of law, legislative freedom, democracy, justice, and freedom of press and media.

To effectively stimulate trade and investment, there must be a concerted effort to uplift Pakistan's brand image across all these fronts. This entails upholding the rule of law, adhering steadfastly to democratic principles, ensuring the freedom and independence of vital institutions, and safeguarding the fundamental rights of speech, assembly, and media.

Without tangible improvements in these areas, mere lofty promises, impassioned speeches, or even diligent hard work will fall short in revitalizing the country's economic prospects.

## Commerce News

### PM visits USC outlets to inspect Relief Package implementation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday paid surprise visits to different Utility Stores across the federal capital to inspect the execution of the Prime Minister's Ramadan Relief Package.

During the visit, he interacted with the beneficiaries of the scheme and inquired whether they faced any issues while benefiting from the package.

He instructed the authorities concerned to ensure that entitled beneficiaries of the Relief Package faced no problem in availing the facility.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said the federal government had announced

a historic Ramadan Relief Package worth Rs 12 billion under which eatable items would be provided to the deserving families at subsidized rates during the holy month of Ramadan at the Utility Stores outlets across the country. Besides, he said under the package, additional stipend will also be given to the families registered in Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

PM Shehbaz Sharif said under the federal government's Ramadan Relief Package, Rs 77 per kg subsidy was being given on wheat flour while Rs 100 per kg subsidy was being offered on ghee besides a subsidy of 20-30% on other food items such as rice, pulses, sugar

etc for the deserving families.

He informed that under the package, the BISP beneficiaries would get additional stipend worth Rs 10,000 each, while under Kafalat programme, thousands of families from Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Balochistan will get additional amount of Rs 2000 each.

The prime minister said he had appointed several teams that would pay surprise visits to various USC outlets to check the availability and quality of the food items adding that strict action would be taken against those involved in selling low quality items at the stores.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits various special distribution points of Utility Stores Corporation set up with regard to PM's Ramzan Relief 2024.

### Jam Kamal leads trade initiative to address economic challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): In response to directives from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, chaired meeting at the Ministry of Commerce, marking a proactive approach to addressing current economic challenges.

During the meeting, Minister Khan reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to increasing the nation's trade volume, said a press release issued here.

He emphasized the urgency of meeting the

targets set by the Prime Minister and outlined plans for implementing proactive measures. Minister Khan outlined a clear vision for the Ministry's direction over the next five years. This vision prioritizes increased trade volume, enhanced investment opportunities, and a focus on aligning with global standards.

He emphasized the crucial role of both local and foreign investors in achieving these goals and pledged to create a more facilitating environment for all.

The Minister further

emphasized the importance of measurable targets and tasked the Ministry with setting ambitious yet achievable benchmarks for growth and progress.

Recognizing the critical role of trade revitalization, Minister Khan underscored the importance of strengthening relationships with both domestic and foreign business communities.

He highlighted the necessity of collaboration with stakeholders at all levels to achieve sustainable economic growth.

### Finance Minister says: Documentation of economy, digitization top Govt priorities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that documentation of economy and end to end digitization of tax system were the top priorities of the government.

The finance minister Wednesday visited Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Headquarters and held introductory meeting with its members to discuss the board's performance and future initiatives.

The minister stressed the urgent need for digitizing the FBR to enhance transparency and

efficiency in tax collection. These initiatives would focus on enhancing tax collection through improved FBR governance, comprehensive documentation of the economy, and full-scale digitization.

The government is considering strategies to broaden the tax base by incorporating wholesale/retail, real estate, and agriculture sectors into the tax framework, he said.

Aurangzeb said that digitization is a means to an end and implementing digital solutions are pivotal to modernizing our tax administration.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Food Bilal Yaseen and Provincial Minister for Agriculture Syed Ashiq Hussain along with Deputy Commissioner Rafiyya Haider inspecting the prices of Edibles Items during their visit to Badami Bagh Vegetable and Fruit market.

### Shafay for bringing new investments to Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Provincial Minister for Industries & Trade Chaudhry Shafay Hussain on Wednesday underscored the need to bring new investment in Punjab so as to create new employment opportunities and vowed to make the province as a real trade and investment hub.

He expressed these views during his visit to Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) office here. The Board CEO Jalal Hassan briefed the minister about the performance of PBIT and its future line of action.

Chaudhry Shafay

Hussain called for arranging road shows in such countries having potential to invest here in Punjab. He said that the PBIT Board of Directors would be activated soon and such persons would be introduced in the PBIT who can play their vigorous role to bring new investment in the province.

The Provincial Minister directed the authorities concerned to persuade the solar panel companies to manufacture solar panels at the local level.

### PAJCCI hails by-road transportation of fruits from Pakistan to Russia

PESHAWAR (APP): Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) has highly hailed transportation of fruits from Pakistan to Russia through centuries old road link between Sub-Continent and Central Asian Republics (CARs) via Afghanistan.

"The news about sending of citrus in 16 trucks of National Logistic Cell (NLC) from Pakistan to

Russia is very good omen for businessmen of the country and would open new vistas of trade and commerce in the region," observed Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Coordinator PAJCCI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a press statement issued here on Wednesday, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said this trade route has great potential which if tapped would prove very valuable for country.

### LESCO detects 63,066 power pilferers in 181 days

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 63,066 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) in 181 day of grand anti-power theft campaign. The LESCO spokesman told media here Wednesday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves.

### Chinese loans aimed at steering Pakistan out of debt trap: consul general

FAISALABAD (APP): Chinese Consul General in Lahore Zhao Shiren said on Wednesday that Chinese debt was only 13 per cent of total foreign debt of Pakistan and its basic objective was to help steer the country out of the debt trap by extending necessary financial assistance.

Addressing the business community at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said China had never pressured Pakistan for repayment of its loans

while recently the Chinese government rolled over the loan of \$2 billion. He said that Pakistan had got excessive foreign loans while its GDP was only \$350bn. "China is helping Pakistan to overcome its financial constraints," he added.

Responding to a question about issuing multiple visas, Zhao said a very limited number of multiple visas were being issued in addition to the single and double entry visas.

### Gold rates dip by Rs.1,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold in the local market decreased by Rs.1,800 and was traded at Rs.228,300 on Wednesday as against its sale at Rs.230,100 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,544 to Rs.195,730 from Rs.197,274 whereas that 10 gram 22 karat gold decreased to Rs.179,420 from Rs.180,834, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver witnessed no change and was traded at Rs.2,600 and Rs.2,229.08 respectively.



Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing a meeting during his visit to FBR Headquarters.



# Pakistan, China to march toward shared development, prosperity: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday said Pakistan and China will march toward shared development and prosperity with joint investments in diverse projects.

In an interview with Xinhua news agency, PM Sharif said the friendship between Pakistan and China spanned more than 70 years and has been nurtured by both countries' leadership to promote friendly relations.

He added that the two countries have developed as all-weather, "Iron Brothers" and have unique associations of friendship that have stood the test of time. "This friendship now must achieve higher heights," he added.

Chinese President Xi Jinping had congratulated Sharif on his election as prime minister of Pakistan on March 3. In his response, Sharif deeply appreciated Xi's warm message of facilitation and continued support for Pakistan. "I deeply value his sentiments not only for the people of Pakistan, for our

friendship, but our mutual cooperation," he said. "For me, it's a very good start." Highlighting Chinese modernization, a key term defining China's journey to rejuvenation, Sharif, who has served three terms as chief minister of Punjab province, stressed that Pakistan should emulate the model.

"It is a great success model and success story," the prime minister said, adding that generations of visionary Chinese leaders have led their people to create unprecedented development miracles, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and providing vast rural populations with access to education, health, medical facilities, and employment.

The Chinese modernization model created growth centers and sectors that produce competing products by procuring modern knowledge in science and technology, he said. "Despite challenges in recent years, China's growth has still gone steadily compared to other countries, which is a re-

markable achievement," he added.

Pakistan should replicate this model in the country to alleviate poverty, provide jobs to the youth, and encourage small and medium entrepreneurs to kickstart businesses in villages, towns and cities in sectors of agriculture, industry, information technology and on other platforms, the prime minister said.

Citing Pakistan as one of the first batch of countries joining the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), PM Sharif said that Pakistan fully and firmly supports China-proposed GDI and Global Security Initiative and believes the initiatives will further create strong connections between global communities.

He commended the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a very visionary initiative, which spans continents and alleviates poverty and hunger in the countries, promotes investments, and boosts education and health.



ISLAMABAD: Commander of Bahrain National Guard calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## NA passes resolution demanding ZAB be declared national democratic hero

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Wednesday passed a resolution urging the Federal Government to officially declare former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as a Shaheed and national democratic hero.

The resolution, moved by Shazia Marri, recognized that the trial and subsequent conviction of former Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were a gross miscarriage of justice.

The resolution saluted the struggles of Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan People's Party workers who sacrificed their lives to establish this truth.

It appreciated the de-

## PM hopeful of Pak-Gulf trade to surpass \$1 bn annually

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that once the Pakistan-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Free Trade Agreement comes into effect, the existing bilateral trade volume of USD 1 billion per annum had the potential to enhance manifold.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Commander of the National Guard of the Kingdom of Bahrain General Sheikh Mohammad Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa who called on him to convey the greetings of King of Bahrain Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

## New govt to start work on five new economic corridors: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Soon after the formation of the elected government, progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), particularly the five new economic corridors, including the Corridor of Job Creation, Innovation, Green Energy and Inclusive Regional Development, has been expedited.

The newly-appointed Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, chaired an important meeting on Wednesday to initiate work on the five new corridors in the second phase of CPEC, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary Planning Awaiz Manzoor Sumra and senior officials of the CPEC Secretariat. During the meeting, a comprehensive briefing was given to the minister on the progress of CPEC projects, recommendations of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), and working groups held last year.

Additionally, the MoUs signed during the third Belt and Road Summit were also reviewed in the meeting.

The Minister was updated on key projects such as ML-1, Karakoram Highway (Phase 2) D.I Khan Zhub, Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), and others.

While reviewing the projects, the Minister directed stakeholders to expedite their implementation process without further delay. "No further hindrance in the implementation of CPEC agreements will be tolerated," remarked the Minister, while instructing stakeholders to immediately coordinate with relevant ministries for the speedy implementation of the projects.



KARACHI: A large number of women in queue to get fruits and vegetables for just Rs.10 per Kg in Ramadan-ur-Mubarak organized by Hammad Foundation Pakistan camp at Hasan Square area.

## Rangers thwart kidnapping for ransom attempt

KARACHI (APP): In a swift response to an abduction attempt, Pakistan Rangers Sindh successfully prevented the kidnapping of two underage siblings, Ayyan and Anabia, in Karachi's North Nazimabad area.

According to spokesmen for Sindh Rangers, the said children went missing on March 12. The children's mother received a distressing call from overseas demanding a ransom for their safe return.

The abductors demanded a hefty sum of 1 million rupees in exchange for the children's release.

Utilizing advanced investigative techniques, Pakistan Rangers Sindh, in collaboration with police, swiftly located the children. Fearing capture, the abductors abandoned the children in Karachi's Hyderi area before fleeing the scene.

Responding promptly, Pakistan Rangers Sindh secured the children and safely reunited them with their parents.

## AIT launches digital version of Tehzeeb magazine

KARACHI (APP): Aligarh Institute of Technology (AIT) has organized the launching ceremony to introduce the digital version of monthly Tehzeeb.

The event was attended by the Chairman Governing Body, AIT Jawaid Anwar, Convenor AIT, Engr. Muhammad Arshad Khan, Principal AIT, Shahid Jameel, Convenor IT Committee, Farrukh Nizami, Cdre. @ Salim Siddique, Shajar Ali Hashmi, Mukhtar Naqvi, Hanif Khan, Prof. Dr. Waleej Haider, Dr. Aamjad ul Haq and others.

The Chief Guest of the ceremony was the Chairman Governing Body AIT, Jawaid Anwar.

Chairman Governing Body, AIT, Jawaid Anwar said that the newspaper and magazine industry is currently experiencing significant transformations due to digital technologies. Magazines have changed their approaches offering their content on online platforms and mobile applications.

He appreciated the efforts of the IT team and the concerned who have been involved in producing the digital version of Tehzeeb magazine. It is indeed a great work to preserve the magazine in document form. After digitalization, Tehzeeb can be accessed instantly from any location, any time, through countless digital channels. Once published, it will be available globally.



ASTORE: Heavy machinery being used to remove snow and boulders from the blocked road of Astore Valley by the staffer of Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management authority and Works Department after heavy snow fall and rain in area caused land sliding in diffident area.

## Dr Naeem stresses to make lady health workers independent

SUKKUR (APP): A dissemination event was organized by IRD in a local hotel. Project Director EPI Sindh Dr Muhammad Naeem Rajput was the chief guest while Project Director RMNCH Sindh Lady Health Workers Dr Farhana Memon and Director Health Services.

District Health Officers of various partner organization districts and frontline health workers including lady health workers, vaccinators participated along with Dr Saqib Shaikh.

According to a release issued here on Wednesday, Deputy Director Maternal and Child Health, Ms Maryam Mehmood said that IRD has taken research-based initiatives.

While appreciating the services and leadership of IRD Global Director Dr Subhash Chandra, she said that our aim is to ensure that no child is left behind in terms of immunization.

Maryam Mehmood said that IRD always aims to make all initiatives cost-effective and equipped with modern technology.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja chairing a briefing on the working and projects of Ministry of IT & Telecom.

## Visits FIA HQs Interior Minister orders FIA to take measures to curb corruption, smuggling

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday vowed to crackdown on corruption and improve the agency's efficiency.

He was addressing officer after reaching Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Headquarters where he was welcomed by Director General (DG) FIA.

He said corruption will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Corruption is the evil of our society, there will be zero tolerance on it.

He said that FIA is a very important institution of national security and safety, it has to be upgraded and brought to international standards.

The minister directed, pending promotion cases should be disposed of within thirty days, to encourage officers.

## Injured ASI of Larkana died in Karachi hospital

LARKANA (APP): Police ASI Bashir Ahmad Abro died in a private hospital of Karachi Wednesday. He was injured as a result of the collision of the police mobile included in the protocol of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah a day ago on the airport road near Larkana city.

He was then shifted to a Private hospital in Karachi for further treatment, but he could not survive. His body was brought to Pir Chindam village of Shikarpur District Taluk Garhi Yasin where his funeral prayers was performed. DIG Larkana Region Nasir Aftab, SSP Shikarpur and Additional SPP Larkana Dr. Muhammad Imran Khan, Police officers, political and social activists, heirs, relatives and others participated in large numbers.

## Karachi man sent to prison for marrying 15-year-old girl

KARACHI (INP): A sessions court in Karachi sentenced a man to prison after declaring that he illegally married a 15-year-old girl.

The case was filed by the girl's father, alleging that the girl was married illegally.

The culprit, named Muhammad Aslam, has been sentenced to two years in prison.

However, the man cleric who officiated the nikkah and the people who signed as witnesses are absconding from the law.

The legal age of marriage in Pakistan is 16, except in Sindh where it is 18.

## Red Crescent distributes 2,000 ration bags among needy students

LARKANA (APP): Red Crescent Pakistan with the support of the Government of China on Wednesday distributed 2,000 ration bags in the needy students in 18 public schools of Larkana District.

On this occasion, Director of Primary Schools Education Region Larkana Gulsheer Soomro said, "We are very grateful to the Chairman of Pakistan Red Crescent Sardar Shahid Hussain Leghari and the Government of China for distributing ration bags in schools during this period of inflation."

He said that this is the first phase of distribution of ration by Pakistan Red Crescent in public schools.

## Imran Khan foresees SL-like situation in Pakistan following 'rigged polls'

RAWALPINDI (INP): Slamming the 2024 national general election once again, incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan has predicted Sri Lanka-like situation in the country as the nation's hopes were shattered by "stealing the mandate".

"My all predictions have proven true," the former prime minister said during an informal interaction with journalists in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, in which he reiterated that he was not engaging into talks with the current rulers to reach a "deal".

"Each and everything is based on lies [...] like the election was a lie [...] the security threat was also a lie," the cricketer-turned-politico said, adding that the PTI was deliberately kept away from the 2024 polls.

Khan, the deposed premier who was removed from power via a parliamentary vote in April 2022, said that the voters took revenge on the polling day but the "change via vote was not accepted".

He added that the former ruling party would continue its peaceful protests against the rigging bests approaching the Supreme Court (SC).



KARACHI: People sit and wait for iftar to break their fast during holy month of Ramadan.

## 4 more dead bodies of fishermen found, 2 other still missing

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Navy and Maritime Securities search teams have found 4 more dead bodies of missing fishermen while the search of 2 others continued on Wednesday.

Earlier, Navy and Maritime Securities search teams found four dead bodies of missing sailors on yesterday. A total of 12 fishermen were missing when their boat capsized in Hijamero Creek, area situated between Thatta and Badin few days back.

Rescue operation was started with the help of Pakistan Navy's fast boats and PMSA aircraft, helicopters. Dead bodies of four fishermen were found while search operation for 10 other fishermen still missing continued.

## Rangers bust Iranian oil smuggling ring, seize thousands liters of oil

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh, along with police and customs intelligence, conducted a joint operation based on intelligence information.

During the operation in areas connected to Gadap, Super Highway, they apprehended 14 suspects involved in Iranian oil smuggling at three different locations. According to the spokesperson of Sindh Rangers, the apprehended suspects were found in possession of 22,800 liters of Iranian diesel, 6 smuggling units, 6 tanks, cash amounting to approximately Rs 0.5 million, and 17 mobile phones. Additionally, 5 trucks and 2 cars used in the smuggling operation were also seized.

Pakistan Rangers Sindh has vowed to continue the operation until the complete eradication of smuggling activities.



KARACHI: Rangers officials conduct raid in 3 different areas of Gadap and recovered illegal Iranian Oil, Cars and Mobile Phones in Karachi.

## KATI membership renewal deadline March 31: Qandhari

KARACHI (APP): President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Johar Qandhari, has issued a reminder to all members, emphasizing the importance of renewing their KATI membership before the approaching deadline of March 31, 2024. According to the Trade Organization Act 2013, failure to renew



HYDERABAD: People purchase flour bags on subsidize rates from vehicle of Prime Minister program at Latifabad.

## SFA, retailers to take action against milk adulteration unanimously

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Authority (SFA) and All Milk Retailers Association (AMRA) on Wednesday unanimously decided to take action against milk adulteration.

Director General SFA Agha Fakhar Hussain chaired the meeting held at SFA Office here on Wednesday.

Office bearers of Milk Retailers including Sohail Naqvi, Amjad Bhatti, Abdul Waheed Gaddi and others also attended the meeting.

On this occasion, the office bearers of All Milk Retailers assured full cooperation with the SFA.

Addressing the meeting, the DG SFA said that we are ensuring the supply of adulteration-free food items. Five labs are