

# Independent

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## Ruling alliance bags five out of six seats in Senate by-elections

PPP gets four, PML-N and JUI-F win one seat each in by-polls held in National, Sindh and Balochistan assemblies

**Independent Report**  
KARACHI: The ruling alliance at the Centre managed to win the by-polls on the five out of the six Senate seats with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) securing the majority of the seats. The polling for the six Senate seats in the National, Sindh and Balochistan assemblies began at 9am and ended at 4pm.

These six seats had fallen vacant under Article 223 of the Constitution which prohibits lawmakers from holding dual membership.

The sub-section 4 of the article states: "Subject

to clause (2) if a member of either House or of a Provincial Assembly becomes a candidate for a second seat which, in accordance with clause (1), he may not hold concurrently with his first seat, then his first seat shall become vacant as soon as he is elected to the second seat."

Islamabad  
In the National Assembly, PPP's Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani managed to retain the seat he vacated after securing.

Out of the 301 votes cast, Gillani, who was a joint candidate of the ruling coalition of six parties, secured

204 votes compared to his rival Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Ilyas Mehrban who could only get 88 votes.

Nine votes were rejected during the vote count.

The seat on which the elections were held today had fallen vacant after Gillani was elected as MNA in the Feb 8 elections.

The PPP leader has been tipped for the Senate chairman's slot.

Sindh  
In Sindh, 124 votes were cast during the polling held to fill the two vacant general seats of the upper house.

After the count, PPP's Jam Saifullah Khan Dharejo and Muhammad Aslam Abro managed to get elected to the Senate by obtaining 58 and 57 votes respectively.

While Nazzerullah and Shazia Sohail of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) were only able to get 4 votes each.

During the count, one vote was rejected.

The seats had fallen vacant as PPP senators Nisar Ahmed Khuro and Jam Mehtab Dahar were elected to the Sindh Assembly in the February 8 general elections.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Economic Roadmap for next 5 years.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah talking to media persons, at Sindh Assembly in Karachi.

## PM reviews five-year roadmap for economic progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday chaired a high-level review meeting on a five-year roadmap for economic progress of the country.

The five-year roadmap focused on decrease in inflation, poverty alleviation, and provision of employment.

The prime minister said consultation should be held on this plan with all stakeholders of different sectors of the economy.

Without wasting any time, implementation of projects for the economic stability and progress of the country should be ensured, he added. The prime minister said a schedule of implementation for the projects should be presented, adding steps should

be taken on priority basis to speed up progress in the sectors of agriculture, livestock, information technology, foreign investment and small and medium industries. He said the government would reduce its expenditure and he would not allow further waste of money of poor people.

He said in the next five years, the country's economy would be stabilized to put the country on the path of progress.

The PM said tax revenue would be increased with digitalization and technology, while the per acre yield in the agriculture sector would also be increased with the use of technology. The loss-making government institutions would be privatized on priority basis, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif casts his vote in the Senate by-elections at the Parliament House.

## Anti-Muslim citizenship law 'exposes sinister agenda' of India: Pakistan

CAA premised on false assumption that minorities being persecuted in Muslim countries, says FO

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan has taken strong exception to the implementation of controversial Citizenship Amendment Act by India. At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad today, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the legislation and the relevant rules are evidently discriminatory in nature as they differentiate amongst the people on the basis of their faith.

The spokesperson said the regulation and laws are premised on a false assumption that minorities are being persecuted in Muslim countries of the region and the facade of India being a safe haven for them. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

pointed out that the rising wave of Hinduism under the BJP government has led to rapid political, economic and social victimization of Muslims and other minorities in India. She said the discriminatory steps further expose the sinister agenda of transforming India into Hindu Rashtra.

She advised the Indian authorities to stop pre-choreographed targeting and systematic marginalization of minorities. She said only a few days ago, a group UN special rapporteurs urged corrective actions to protect human rights and attacks against minorities in the run up to India's national elections.

## Zardari welcomes interaction between PM, CM KP

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday welcomed the recent interaction between the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur.

"It is high time we start thinking of working towards healing the divisions Pakistan has been going through", he added.

The president said that he had always advocated for prioritizing Pakistan above all else, and it was time we gave people hope in the democratic process by showing them it could work. "This outreach is a good beginning", he stated.

## Gillani regains senate's seat from Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani, the joint candidate of the ruling coalition, regained the Senate seat from the federal capital on Thursday by defeating Sunni Ittehad Council's candidate Chaudhary Ilyas Mehrban, according to unofficial results.

According to an unofficial tally, out of the total 301 votes polled, Yousuf Gillani bagged 204 votes, while his rival Chaudhary Ilyas Mehrban received 88 votes. Nine votes were rejected. The seat was fallen vacant following the victory of Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani as a Member National Assembly in the February 8 general elections from Multan.



ISLAMABAD: The IMF Mission Chief for Pakistan Mr. Nathan Porter and Federal Minister for Finance Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb along with their teams started second review of Stand-by Arrangement.

## President vows to work closely with Chinese counterpart to deepen cooperation

Asif Ali Zardari thanks President Xi Jinping for felicitations on re-election

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari Thursday thanked Chinese President Xi Jinping for extending him warm congratulations on his re-election as the President of Pakistan. While replying to President Xi's letter, the president expressed his commitment to working closely with the Chinese President to deepen practical cooperation, strengthen the all-weather partnership, and foster a shared community for the benefit of the two countries.

In his letter, President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan and China shared a unique bond forged in the crucible of history and nurtured by mutual respect, understanding, and common views on all global issues, according to a statement issued by the President House.

"Our solid friendship serves as an anchor for regional peace, stability and development", he highlighted.

He wrote that Pakistan and China were not merely neighbours, but iron-clad brothers fully committed to the success of our All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

The president noted with satisfaction that Pakistan and China had made significant progress in the diverse fields of bilateral cooperation, particularly in the development of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).



KARACHI: Ayan and Anabiya who were re covered from North Nazimabad meeting with Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori.

## CS urges 100% registration, immunization of newborns to effectively combat polio virus

KARACHI (APP): Chief Secretary Sindh, Syed Asif Hyder Shah on Thursday reiterated the critical importance of achieving 100% registration and routine immunization of newborns to effectively combat the polio virus.

During the meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Sindh at the Emergency Operations Centre Sindh, Irshad Ali Sodhar, Secretary Health Syed Mansoor Abbas Rizvi, WHO, UNICEF, and representatives from the National Stop Transmission of Polio (NSTOP) were present to discuss the overall status of polio virus and its prevention strategies.

The chief secretary highlighted that this first meeting as Chief Secretary marked his commitment to polio eradication, reminding

of his proactive stance during his tenure as Commissioner Karachi.

He stressed the necessity of focusing on zero-dose children to ensure routine immunization, calling for synergy between the polio programme and the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI).

Furthermore, the chief secretary affirmed plans to increase the number of vaccinators and enhance facilities to facilitate effective vaccination drives for children. He reiterated that until 100% registration of newborns was achieved, the challenge of polio virus eradication would persist.

During the briefing, Coordinator Emergency Operations Centre Sindh, Irshad Ali Sodhar, highlighted that Pakistan reported six polio cases last year, including two from Sindh and four from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Murad believes CM should establish working relationship fed govt for public interest

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah believes that a chief minister should establish a friendly and cooperative working relationship with the federal government, regardless of the political party in power, which is important for addressing the issues faced by the people of the province.

President Asif Ali Zardari has taught us that to serve the people of the province, the chief minister must cultivate a good working relationship with the federal government, regardless of which party it belongs to. This is what Mr Ali Amin Gandapur must follow for the interest of the people of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This he said while talking to media just after casting his vote for senate election at Sindh Assembly.

When asked about the General Election, Mr Shah mentioned that the Grand

Democratic Alliance (GDA) had not put forward its candidates in all the constituencies. He stated that in his own constituency of Sehwan, his GDA opponent was unable to arrange polling agents at all polling stations, which was a similar situation wherever the GDA had fielded its candidates across the province.

Mr. Shah found it surprising that the GDA was claiming that they had been forcibly defeated despite these circumstances.

To a question, the CM said that law & order has improved in the province with the induction of the elected government.

"We are taking necessary measures to control law & order in the province by curbing kidnapping for ransom in the Riverine area and street crime in Karachi," he said and added he has given the maintenance of law & order as one of the top priorities of his

government. Murad Shah was asked about the appointment of a new federal finance minister. He stated that the country is currently going through a critical phase, and he believes that the new finance minister would be vital in steering the country out of its financial crisis.

To a question, he mentioned that he held the portfolio of the University & Boards and was looking into the matter of the chairman Board of Intermediate Karachi. He said that he would resolve the issue in the interests of the educational board.

Talking about the appointment of chairman IRSA, the chief minister said that IRSA came into being through the 1991 Water Accord. The purpose was to create an autonomous authority so that the federal government could not influence its decisions.

## PPP's Saifullah Dharejo, Aslam Abro elected as Senators from Sindh

KARACHI (APP): The Returning Officer for Senate by election in Sindh, Sharifullah on Thursday announced result of the polls held on two vacant seats in Sindh Assembly and declared both candidates of Pakistan People's Party Jam Saifullah Dharejo and Aslam Abro as winners.

According to result, Pakistan People's Party candidate Jam Saifullah Dharejo secured 58 and Aslam Abro obtained 57 votes while Suni Ittehad Council's candidates Nazirullah and Shazia Sohail secured only 4 votes each.

## Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.15 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan reached at US\$ 13,151.3 million in the week ended on March 08, 2024 while foreign reserves held by State Bank increased to \$ 7,912.9 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank increased by \$ 17 million to \$ 7,912.9 million during the week under review.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks also increased by \$ 114.1 million to \$ 5,238.4 million, it added.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on March 01, 2024, were \$ 13,020 million. Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were \$ 7,895.7 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were \$ 5,124.3 million.

## US Navy ship arrives Pakistan to conduct sea exercise with Pak Navy

KARACHI (APP): US Navy Ship USS INDIANAPOLIS, Freedom Class Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) here on Thursday visited Karachi Port and conducted a sea drill with the Pakistan Navy. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), upon arrival at Karachi, US Navy Ship was received by senior officials of Pakistan Navy.

During the stay at Karachi, activities included professional interaction with PN officials and Ship's

crew in the form of table top discussions on contemporary issues besides planning and coordination meeting for conduct of joint sea exercise. At sea Pakistan Navy Ship ALAMGIR with embarked helicopter carried out sea exercise with visiting US Navy ship to enhance interoperability between both navies.

The sea exercise was aimed to strengthen mutual professional skills through cooperation and learning from each other experience.

## Dues of Rs 10.5bln to be paid to retired officers, employees of KMC: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that dues of Rs 10.5 billion have to be paid to the retired officers and other employees of the KMC and District Municipal Corporations.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab expressed these views while addressing the dues distribution ceremony for retired officers and employees, said a statement on Thursday.

A total of 763 such employees who retired from service during the period from 2011 to 2017 are being paid more than 50 crore rupees today and this process will continue, he said. PPP is for the people and will continue to serve the people, he added.

Municipal Commissioner S. M Afzal Zaidi, President of People's Labour's Bureau Karachi Aslam Samoon, Mayor Karachi Spokesperson for Political Affairs Karamullah Waqasi, Deputy Parliamentary Leader Dil Muhammad, Juman Darwan, Financial Advisor KMC Imtiaz Abro, Director Welfare Mahmood Baig, local leaders and heads of various departments of KMC were also present on this occasion.

President of People's Labor Bureau Aslam Samu also addressed the ceremony.

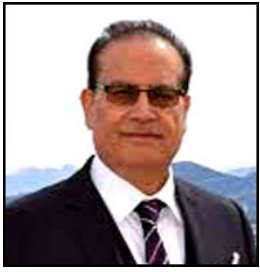
The Mayor Karachi said that the arrears of the officers and employees are their right to receive.



# Will Shahbaz's Hard Work alone Do the Magic?

By Qamar Bashir

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



The current state of Pakistan's economy is alarming, with several key sectors facing significant challenges. The electricity circular debt has ballooned to an alarming Rs. 4000 billion, while the national carrier, PIA, is incurring losses exceeding Rs. 800 billion. Furthermore, the state of electricity plants has deteriorated, contributing to inefficiencies and financial losses. Rampant electricity theft has resulted in losses exceeding Rs. 400 billion, exacerbating the financial strain on the energy sector.

Adding to the financial woes, corruption within government institutions, such as the FBR, has resulted in the embezzlement of over Rs. 300 billion. State-owned enterprises are also struggling, with losses surpassing Rs. 500 billion.

The consequences of these financial mismanagement are dire, disproportionately affecting the majority of the population. While a small percentage of the population benefits from these losses, the burden falls heavily on the remaining 90%, leading to increased taxes, utility charges, and commodity prices. As a result, the vulnerable population is experiencing a decline in living standards, facing challenges such as inflated school fees, transportation costs, and housing expenses, pushing them further into poverty.

The Prime Minister

Shahbaz Sharif painted a bleak picture during his address at the inaugural meeting of the newly sworn-in cabinet. It echoed a similar sentiment to the speech he delivered upon assuming the premiership in April 2022. However, this time, there was a noticeable departure from scapegoating, as he refrained from attributing the country's economic woes to the PFI.

Reflecting on our collective memory, we can recall countless instances where newly sworn-in leaders, be they prime ministers, military dictators, or technocrats, have delivered similar speeches promising to address the nation's dire economic and financial circumstances. They vow to leave no stone unturned in their efforts to uplift the country. However, history bears witness to the rapid fading of these promises as they become immersed in the trappings of power and privilege.

Once in office, these leaders often prioritize the perks and prestige of their positions, neglecting their initial pledges. They soon confront the reality of entrenched systemic issues, perpetuated by powerful vested interests within the government, civil service, and military bureaucracy. These individuals benefit from the status quo and resist any attempts at meaningful reform that might threaten their own positions or privileges.

Should a government dare to challenge these entrenched interests and pursue genuine reform efforts, they are met with polite warnings to desist from disrupting the established order. If they persist in their efforts, they face the threat of being swiftly removed

from power. This cycle of promising change but ultimately succumbing to the pressures of the status quo perpetuates a vicious cycle of stagnation and decline, leaving the nation's progress at the mercy of those who prioritize self-interest over the common good.

In his extensive address, Sharif reiterated his steadfast belief in the power of "hard work" to surmount the nation's challenges. However, he also acknowledged the limitations of hard work alone, recognizing the imperative for innovative and creative solutions. He emphasized the importance of learning from past mistakes and, above all, addressing the underlying systemic issues plaguing the country.

In addition to the challenges highlighted by the Prime Minister, several other pressing issues confront the new government, casting a shadow over its ability to steer the country towards stability and growth.

The contraction of the real GDP, plunging to -0.2% in 2023, paints a grim economic picture, with projected modest growth of only 2% in 2024 offering little solace. The surge in the unemployment rate to 8.5% in 2023 signals deep-seated economic distress, with scant prospects for improvement in the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, the relentless escalation of the Consumer Price Index, which reached a staggering 29.2% in 2023, threatens to exacerbate the plight of ordinary citizens, with projections indicating little respite in 2024.

Compounding these challenges is the dwindling foreign investment, which trickled to a mere

\$2.7 billion in 2023. Meanwhile, the country grapples with a mounting external debt burden, soaring to approximately \$126.3 billion by 2023. This fiscal strain is further compounded by a persistent fiscal deficit, oscillating between -7.6% and -7.8% of GDP from 2022 to 2024.

To add to the woes, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have plummeted to critically low levels, hovering around \$8 billion, posing severe constraints on the government's ability to manage its economic affairs effectively. These daunting challenges underscore the urgent need for decisive and strategic action to stabilize the economy and foster sustainable growth.

Overcoming these challenges is undoubtedly formidable, yet not insurmountable. Numerous nations, grappling with severe economic and financial predicaments, have successfully resolved their underlying issues, confronted the proverbial "elephants in the room," and propelled themselves toward accelerated growth and development.

However, in the context of Pakistan, these metaphorical elephants wield considerable power. They not only influence the selection of members in provincial and national assemblies, the Senate, the president, and the prime minister, but also dictate the composition of the cabinet. Any form of resistance or disobedience is met with swift and unforgiving consequences, as punishment is meted out promptly. The entrenched influence of these powerful entities poses a significant hurdle to meaningful reform and underscores

the complexity of navigating the political landscape in Pakistan.

Furthermore, allegations surfaced suggesting that the electoral process was orchestrated to prevent Nawaz Sharif from potentially assuming the prime ministership for the fourth time. Subsequently, upon the formation of the government, key ministries were entrusted to unelected individuals. This composition sends a clear message: interference in the country's internal affairs, financial and economic sectors, or the Special Investment Facilitation Council will not be tolerated. The strategic allocation of ministerial portfolios underscores the establishment's intent to maintain control over critical areas and deter any attempts to challenge its authority.

With unelected technocrats, handling the economy and the finance of the country, the nation is bracing itself for another round of economic strain. The government has initiated a media campaign to manage expectations regarding imminent hikes in taxes, utility costs, and petroleum prices. This effort is packaged as a Ramzan Package, purportedly worth Rs. 12 billion, aimed at showcasing the government's purported commitment to shielding the most vulnerable segments of society from the impending financial strain. However, this move is a familiar tactic employed before the implementation of stringent economic measures. The provision of free ration, though ostensibly a gesture of support, is woefully inadequate to sustain vulnerable families

for more than 15 days. It fails to address the systemic challenges faced by these families, leaving them vulnerable to hunger, deprivation of basic necessities, lack of livelihood opportunities, inadequate education, and even insufficient clothing and footwear. Thousands of employees of State-Owned Enterprises are anxiously anticipating the potential privatization and sale of their employers, which could lead to retrenchments, golden handshakes, or terminations, exacerbating the already high levels of unemployment. The looming decisions have deterred the PPP from securing cabinet positions, as they seek to avoid public backlash and preserve their political capital.

Regrettably, the current government assumed power under a cloud of controversy, with allegations of electoral rigging and manipulation casting doubt on the legitimacy of its mandate. The opaque and unfair conduct of the election process has raised serious concerns about the transparency and fairness of the government's foundation. Given these circumstances, there are legitimate questions about the ability of a government that ascended to power through questionable means to instill transparency and fairness in the system. The lack of trust in the electoral process undermines the government's credibility and raises doubts about its commitment to upholding democratic principles and governance. These lingering doubts present a significant challenge for the government in its efforts to enact meaningful reforms and gain the trust of the populace.

## Commerce News

### PM made strategy for Rural, Urban centers: Musadiq Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal minister for Petroleum Musadiq Malik on Thursday said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has made a strategy for development in Urban and Rural Centers across the country. He said as for development in rural centers, farmers were needing water, seeds and fertilizer, therefore the PM has decided to ensure to provide fertilizer on subsidized rates to the farmer.

Secondly, the government will provide imported seeds to the farmers so they can increase production. To resolve the issue of water, the government provide solar tube wells to the farmers meet the requirements of cultivation. He said if all these three ingredients are provided to the farmers, his growth will largely increase. He said the government will also encourage the farmers to make small agricultural industrial farms and this

would be a start of green revolution in the country. For urban centers, the prime minister has directed that the banks must be asked to provide small loans to youth and Small medium enterprises (SMS) for their businesses. He said the government has decided to organizes "Boot Camps" to train the fresh students from the universities so they can compete at international level in the field of artificial intelligence. The government if

required will invite master trainers from abroad to train the children, said Malik adding the PM has strictly asked to make a sustainable programme. He said the government has decided to open schools following the model of Danish School to provide free of cost education to the intelligent students from poor segment of society. The government will send those bright students to the world's top class universities for education at government's expense.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatisation, Abdul Aleem Khan chairing a meeting with the financial advisors for divestment of PIACL.



ISLAMABAD: Federal secretary Ministry of National Food security and Research, Capt (R) Muhammad Asif chairs 4th Steering Committee of Project Olive Culture.

### Steering Committee meeting held to enhance country's olive sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 4th Steering Committee meeting for the "OliveCulture - Holistic and Multi-professional Mechanism for a Pakistani Olive Oil Value Chain" Project convened here on Thursday, marking another significant step towards enhancing the country's olive sector. The meeting was chaired by Federal Secretary of the Ministry of National Food Security & Research, Capt. @ Muhammad Asif and co-chaired by Ambassador of Italy in Pakistan Marilina

Armellini, the meeting served as a platform for strategic discussions and collaborative efforts, said a press release. Marilina Armellini expressed her appreciation towards the work done so far by the OliveCulture Project with the close cooperation of the Ministry and the provinces. She said the notable and commendable pace maintained throughout the project was acknowledged and valued. The partnership between Italian and Pakistani experts is deemed

essential for nurturing olive cultivation and enhancing olive oil production. Without this fruitful collaboration, the objectives of the project would be unattainable. Capt. @ Muhammad Asif expressed that the project's significant success in Pakistan owes much to Italian collaboration. While Pakistan's environment is inherently conducive to olive cultivation, prior government engagements at provincial and federal levels were limited in their impact.

### Surplus wheat available in market: Minister Bilal

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: There is surplus wheat available in the market and the administration should keep a close watch on the supply of good quality wheat at fixed price. The cabinet committee will soon finalize the policy regarding the distribution of 'bardana' per acre after which the applications for the distribution of bardana will be received. Wheat procurement campaign will be fully transparent and merit will be ensured. These views were expressed by Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin while presiding over a meeting at

the Darbar Hall of Civil Secretariat here on Thursday. Secretary Food Moazzam Iqbal Sipra, Director Food Lt @ Muhammad Shoaib Khan, DG Food Authority Asim Javed, Cane Commissioner Punjab Abdul Rauf were present on this occasion while all Deputy Director Foods from across Punjab participated in the meeting through video link. Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin in his address directed that a policy regarding the wheat procurement for the year 2024 should be finalized soon, which will be approved by the Cabinet Committee.

These views were expressed by Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin while presiding over a meeting at

### President of Iran's visit could seal free trade agreement: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam on Thursday said that there is a strong possibility that the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will be finalized in the upcoming visit of the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan. He said that from the upcoming visit of the Iranian president to Pakistan, there will be several bilateral economic and trade agreements between the two countries. He said that the agreements

will further strengthen the mutual economic and trade relations along with promoting the bilateral business between the two countries. Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam made these remarks during his visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) at the invitation of President ICCI, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri here on Thursday. The Iranian ambassador said that the current bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Iran is \$2.5 billion, which has increased by 11

percent in the last 11 months. He said that after the FTA and bilateral agreements between the two governments for the promotion of mutual trade, there is a strong possibility of doubling the mutual trade between Pakistan and Iran to reach \$5 billion in the next few years. He said that the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline is a huge facility for the people of Pakistan on behalf of the government of Iran, which will benefit both the domestic and industrial sectors of Pakistan.

### Pakistan's seafood exports to China up 13% in 2023

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan's seafood exports to China reached \$247.3 million in 2023 compared to the previous year. The rise is due to the growing demand for seafood products in China, a trend that has been steadily increasing over the past few years, said Ghulam Qadir, Investment and Trade Counsellor at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing. Qadir noted that Pakistan's seafood exports to China reached \$247.3 million, marking a 13% increase for the January-December period in 2023 year-on-year. In 2022, exports were valued at \$219.3 million, while in 2021, they stood at \$139.29 million, as per data from the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC).

### Kyrgyz honorary consul felicitated

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftikhar Ali Malik Thursday greeted leading businessman Meher Kashif Younis on his appointment as the honorary consul of Kyrgyzstan in Lahore including the territory of Punjab province. Malik said that it is recognition of Younis' remarkable achievements and dedication to fostering international relations and praised his commitment to serving as a bridge between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan.

### CCP authorizes acquisition of 'Pakistani Microfinance Bank by Dutch Company'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the acquisition of Advans Pakistan Microfinance Bank Limited by a Dutch-based holding company, MNT-Halan Pak B.V. This transaction marks a significant development in the microfinance banking sector of Pakistan. MNT - Halan Pak B.V. is a holding company incorporated in the Netherlands, with a presence

in Pakistan through its subsidiaries, Halan Wallet (Private) Limited and Halan Finance Limited. On the other hand, Advans Pakistan Microfinance Bank Limited is a public limited company operating in the microfinance banking sector of Pakistan, said a press release issued here on Thursday. The acquisition involves the purchase of 100% shareholding of Advans Pakistan Microfinance Bank Limited from Advans S.A SICAR.



## Governor inaugurates foreign faculty hostel in Islamia College

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Thursday visited Islamia College Peshawar and inaugurated foreign faculty hostel.

Vice Chancellor Islamia College, Professor Gul Majeed and faculty members were also present on the occasion. The governor was told that hostel was constructed with the financial assistance of higher education commission with an estimated cost of Rs. 50 million.

He was told that

hostel has 16 rooms having all the needed facilities.

KP Governor also directed to construct the entrance gate of the college keeping in view its historic importance and announced support to beautify garden of foreign faculty hostel.

Vice Chancellor Islamia College also presented annual report of the institution and a souvenir to the governor.

Governor also chaired 136<sup>th</sup> Senate meeting of University of Peshawar (UoP) in Governor House. The meeting was also

attended by Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan, Vice Chancellor, Professor Muhammad Salim and concerned officials of finance, higher education and establishment department.

The meeting approved development budget of varsity, new candidates of planning committee, statutes for management solutions, upgrading of zoology department to Institute of Zoological Sciences and experience relaxation to appoint four professors.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presiding over 136<sup>th</sup> Senate meeting of University of Peshawar.

## KPCM for relaunching of billion tree project

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has directed the concerned authorities to relaunch Billion Tree Plus project in the province. Presiding over a meeting of the Department of Forests, Environment and Wildlife at Chief Minister House Peshawar, he said that it was as an important initiative to increase the forest area in the province, said a press release issued here Thursday. The CM directed the concerned authorities to prepare a concrete and workable action plan to stop

deforestation and increase the revenue of the department. He also directed the wildlife department to prepare proposals and action plans for the promotion of fisheries. In order to prevent illegal cutting of trees and deforestation in the province, the CM directed to revise the existing rate of fines and increase to such an extent that the amount of fines should be higher than the value of the timber axed illegal.

He directed installation of CCTV cameras at check posts to keep a close watch on timber smuggling.

## Injured ASI of Machni Gate firing attack died in hospital

PESHAWAR (APP): The injured ASI Mazhar Khan who was undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Peshawar lost his life due to critical injuries he received during the firing attack over Machni Gate by the terrorist two-day earlier.

According to details, the incident of terrorist attack on police over Machni Gate Peshawar wherein two Policemen were martyred and one ASI was injured critically in the attack. The injured ASI Mazhar Khan was undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Peshawar, the Police official said. Two days ago, terrorists attacked the police team in Machni Gate, two policemen were martyred and one other injured in the attack, the Police official said.

## Health Minister hosts E-Kacheri to address public concerns

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister of Health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah presided over the first E-Kachehri live session on Thursday alongside Health Secretary Mahmood Aslam Wazir through social media website.

While addressing the session, the minister said that engaging with the public through social media platforms is a sign of good governance and it bridges the gap between the government and its public.

During the session, Minister Shah personally responded to queries and concerns raised by the public.

Several key officials including Director General Health Dr. Shaukat Ali, Chief HSRU Dr. Khalil, Director General Drugs Dr. Abbas, Director General IMU Dr. Ijaz, Director Public Health Dr. Arshad Roghani, CEO Sehat Sahulat

Program Initiative Dr. Riaz Tanoli, and other relevant stakeholders were also present on the occasion.

The session received around fifteen questions regarding health services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Teaching Institutions (KP MTI), most of which were addressed directly by Minister Qasim Ali Shah, while inquiries regarding specific matters were directed to the relevant authorities.

Health Secretary Mahmood Aslam Wazir highlighted at the onset of the session that addressing public complaints through social media platforms is an integral part of their professional responsibilities.

Queries received regarding the Directorate General Health Services amounted to 20, with comprehensive responses provided by Dr. Shaukat Ali during the session.



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz former Senator Chaudhry Muhammad Tanveer Khan, MNA Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry, MNA Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and others holding a press conference in connection with the murder of Chaudhry Adnan.

## Minister calls for collective efforts to address climate change challenges

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Environment, Climate Change, Forests and Wildlife Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai has said that climate change emerged a global challenge and, in this regard, strengthening the environment department and improving the system are among the top priorities of the incumbent government.

He was addressing the introductory meeting of the Environment Department at his office, Civil Secretariat, here on Thursday. On this

occasion, Provincial Environment Secretary Syed Nazir Hussain Shah and sectional heads of the department gave detailed briefings to the provincial minister regarding the performance.

At the meeting, details were also given to the provincial minister about the ongoing and new annual development program and Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP) schemes of the department. There was also a discussion on the development projects of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's settled and merged districts.

## Nine dead, 1,180 injured in Punjab road accidents

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: At least nine people were killed and 1,180 others injured in 1,123 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 558 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 622 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams. The analysis showed that 668 drivers, 34 underage drivers, 153 pedestrians, and 368 passengers were among the victims of road crashes.

## ANF recovers 46 kg drugs in 3 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting three operations managed to recover 46 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 460 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Karachi Airport, 20.4 kg of opium and 21.6 kg of hashish were recovered from Faisalabad while 4 kg weed was recovered from two suspects arrested from Zarghon Road area in Quetta.

## Deputy Speaker asks officials to provide ration bags at doorsteps

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Deputy Speaker of the Punjab Assembly Malik Zaheer Iqbal Chanar has stated that under the Nigehban Ramadan Package, all necessary measures will be taken to provide ration bags to deserving individuals at their doorsteps throughout the district as per the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He expressed these views in a meeting held at the Circuit House. MPA Malik Khalid Mahmood Waran, MPA Dr. Rana Muhammad Tariq Khan, Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa, Assistant Commissioners, and officials from relevant

departments were also present at the occasion. Deputy Speaker of the Punjab Assembly, Malik Zaheer Iqbal Chanar, while overseeing the provision of food hampers to deserving individuals under the Ramadan Package, emphasized the need to expedite the delivery of the Ramadan Package.

MPA Dr. Rana Muhammad Tariq stated that while considering the dignity of deserving individuals, the provision of ration bags at their doorstep should be ensured. MPA Malik Khalid Mahmood Waran emphasized the need to achieve the objectives of the Ramadan Package swiftly.

## PHC orders removal of Qadri's name from ECL

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar High Court on Thursday issued an order to remove the name of former Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Noor ul Haq Qadri from the Exit Control List (ECL).

A two-member bench comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Waqar Ahmed conducting the hearing on the petition filed by Noor ul Haq Qadri for the removal of his name from ECL.



HYDERABAD: MS Shah Bhitai Hospital Dr Dileep Kumar, Urologist Dr Naveed Akbar and others participate in an awareness walk on World Kidney Day at Shah Bhitai Hospital Latifabad.

# International News

## Kremlin says Putin didn't threaten to use nuclear weapons, US took him out of context

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: The Kremlin said on Thursday that comments on nuclear weapons that Russian President Vladimir Putin made in an interview with state media did not constitute a threat to use them and accused the US of deliberately taking the remarks out of context. Putin said in the interview published on Wednesday that Russia was technically ready for nuclear war and that if the US sent troops to Ukraine, it would be considered a significant escalation of the conflict.

Commenting on Putin's words, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters that Washington understood that the Russian leader was restating Moscow's nuclear doctrine, but accused Russia of deploying "reckless and irresponsible" nuclear rhetoric throughout the Ukraine conflict.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday that Putin had merely been answering a journalist's questions on the subject and restating the already well-known circumstances in which Russia would theoretically be forced to use nuclear weapons.

Peskov also drew attention to the fact that Putin had said in the same interview that the idea of using tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine had never crossed his mind.

Asked about the White House comments, Peskov said: "This was deliberately taking something out of context. Putin made no threats about the use of nuclear weapons in this interview. The president was just talking about the reasons that could make the use of nuclear weapons inevitable."

"These are the reasons that are stated in our relevant documents, which are well known throughout the world. Moreover, everyone in the West deliberately failed to notice his words that it had never occurred to him to use tactical nuclear weapons [in Ukraine], despite the various situations that have developed in the course of the fighting."

"This is a deliberate distortion of the context and an unwillingness to hear President Putin."



GAZASTRIP: A man salvages items from the rubble of the Al-Atrash family home, after it was destroyed in an Israeli strike in Deir el-Balah.

## Israel strikes UN's aid centre in Rafah

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZASTRIP: Amid mounting efforts to bring food to the besieged Palestinian territory, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said one of its aid warehouses in the war-ravaged Gaza was "hit" on Wednesday, wounding scores of people.

"At least one UNRWA staff member was killed and another 22 were injured when Israeli forces hit a food distribution centre in eastern part of Rafah," the UN agency said. The agency's chief Philippe Lazzarini said the attack on one of the very few remaining UNRWA distribution centres in the Gaza Strip comes as food supplies are running out, hunger is widespread and in some areas turning into famine.

The health ministry in Gaza said four people were killed in the "bombing of the warehouse", as Israeli strikes for past five months has caused mass civilian deaths, reduced vast areas to a rubble-strewn wasteland and sparked warnings of looming famine in the Palestinian territory of 2.4 million people.

## Second ship loaded with Gaza aid from Cyprus, says charity

**Monitoring Desk**  
NICOSIA: A second ship with food aid to Gaza was being loaded in Cyprus, a charity arranging the mission said on Thursday, as the first ship in a pilot trial of maritime deliveries near the besieged Palestinian enclave.

World Central Kitchen (WCK) said it was loading a vessel at Larnaca port with 300 tonnes of food aid - including legumes, canned tuna, vegetables, rice and flour.

## Iran, Russia and China show off their ships in a joint naval drill in the Gulf of Oman

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: China, Iran and Russia have begun a joint naval drill in the Gulf of Oman, a crucial waterway near the mouth of the Persian Gulf, officials said Tuesday.

Footage aired by Chinese state television and a video released by the Russian navy showed the ongoing drill, known as "Marine Security Belt 2024."

China sent the guided-missile destroyer Urumqi and the guided-missile frigate Linyi to the exercise. Russia's forces are being led by the Varyag, a Slava-class cruiser.

More than 20 ships, support vessels and combat boats from the three countries, as well as naval helicopters, are involved in the exercise.

A report by Iranian state television quoted the drill's spokesperson, Adm. Mostafa Tajadini, as saying the drill will take place in 17,000 square kilometers (6,600 square miles) of water.

Tajadini added that the three nations' drill — their fourth since 2019 — was also meant to improve trade, confront "piracy and terrorism, support to humanitarian activities and the exchange of information in the field of rescue," among other goals.

Iran has stepped up its military cooperation with Beijing and Moscow in response to regional tensions with the United States, including due to supplying military drones to Russia now being used in Moscow's war on Ukraine.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan and South Africa are observers of the drill.

## Biden and Trump clinch nominations, setting election rematch

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump clinched their parties' presidential nominations on Tuesday with decisive victories in a slate of low-profile primaries, setting up a general election rematch that many voters do not want.

The outcome of contests across Georgia, Mississippi and Washington state was never in doubt. Neither Biden, a Democrat, nor Trump, a Republican, faced major opposition. But the magnitude of their wins gave each man the delegate majority he needed to claim his party's nomination at the summertime national conventions. Not even halfway through the presidential primary calendar.

## Russian military cargo plane crashes with 15 people on board

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russia said one of its Ilyushin Il-76 military cargo planes crashed shortly after take-off on Tuesday with 15 people on board due to a fire in one of its engines.

Russia's defence ministry said the crash took place in the Ivanovo region. Russian online news services said there were no survivors.

Unverified videos on Russian social media networks showed a plane with one engine on fire heading downwards. A dark plume of smoke was shown rising into the sky as a helicopter circled.

Russian media broadcast a video showing the aircraft heading down with at least one of its engines ablaze. The four-engine Il-76 is a heavy-lift transport plane that has been in service since the 1970s with the Soviet and then Russian air force.

## Biden govt bypasses Congress to approve weapons for Ukraine

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The United States will send a new military aid package for Ukraine worth \$300 million, President Joe Biden's administration said on Tuesday, the first such move in months as additional funds for Kyiv remain blocked by Republican leaders in Congress.

The White House has been scrambling to find ways to send more military assistance given the situation on the battle

## US, UN voice concern about India's law on citizenship

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The US government and the United Nations expressed concerns on Tuesday about a contentious religion-based citizenship law in India, with the UN calling the legislation "fundamentally discriminatory in nature".

Rights advocates have criticised the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act, which the Indian government moved to implement on Monday. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said it discriminates against Muslims.

## North Korea's Kim test drives a new tank and orders troops to prepare for war

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un joined troops training on a new model of tank and drove one himself, state media reported Thursday, as his rivals South Korea and the U.S. wrapped up their annual military exercises. It's the third time Kim was reported to have observed military exercises since the start of the 11-day South Korean-U.S. exercises, which he views as rehearsals for an invasion. That's a less provocative option than missile tests. North Korea has intensified launches since 2022 and ramped up belligerent rhetoric this year.

At the tank drills Wednesday, Kim praised the country's latest tank as "the world's most powerful" and told his troops to bolster their "fighting spirits" and complete "preparations for war," according to the official Korean Central News Agency. The other two drills he inspected recently were dedicated to artillery firing and maneuvering exercises.

The tank was first unveiled during a military parade in 2020, and its rolling during Wednesday's drill indicates that it's ready to be deployed, South Korean experts say. Photos of the tank released by North Korea shows it has a launch tube for missiles, a weapons systems the former Soviet Union already operated in the 1970s. The new tank could pose a threat to South Korea, said Yang Uk, an analyst at Asan Institute for Policy Studies, but it remains to be seen whether it can be mass produced. The North's Defense Ministry last week threatened "responsible military activities" in reaction to the South Korea-U.S. military training, which involved a computer-simulated command post training and 48 kinds of field exercises, twice the number conducted last spring.



## IMF sets tough conditions for new loan programme; urges sweeping reforms

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a bid to secure a new loan programme, Pakistani officials engaged in rigorous negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) review mission.

The talks, held today, witnessed the IMF putting forth a series of stringent demands, underscoring the imperative need for comprehensive reforms within Pakistan's economic landscape.

Key among the demands outlined by the IMF is the freeing of revolving credit for electricity and gas, coupled with an immediate cessation of theft in these sectors.

Furthermore, the IMF insisted on halting the local gas supply to power plants, emphasizing the urgency of complete digitisation within the Federal Board of Revenue

(FBR). Additionally, the IMF pressed for the swift transition of Distribution Companies (DISCOs) into private sector administration, highlighting the necessity for a clearly defined timeline.

Expressing deep-seated concern over the persistent surge in commodity prices within Pakistan, the IMF delegation questioned the disparity compared to global trends, urging the Pakistani authorities to take decisive measures to curb inflation.

Of particular contention was the provision of subsidised gas to fertilizer plants, with the IMF adamantly calling for its discontinuation. Concrete steps to combat electricity and gas theft were also underscored as non-negotiable requisites for the loan program.



ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, delivers a speech to the senior management at the Ministry of Planning.

## IHC orders Adiala Jail superintendent to arrange Imran's meeting with lawyers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday ordered the superintendent Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi to arrange a meeting of four lawyers of the former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan with him today.

The court also made it clear to the superintendent that non-compliance with the order would invite contempt of court proceedings. Speaking on the occasion, the advocate general, Punjab prayed to the court to make it binding on these lawyers that they would restrict themselves only to the cases the former prime minister was facing.

and would not discuss with him any political matter.

The court asked the AG not to go into details, and ordered the superintendent to arrange Imran's meeting with his lawyers today. The superintendent said that as far his information was concerned, decision in the intra-court appeal was still awaited. Naem Haider Panjutha, on the occasion, requested the court to order the inclusion of his name on the list of lawyers as well.

The superintendent said that was the reason different people entered the jail to meet the ex-PTI chairman.

## PHC dismisses petition of SIC seeking reserved seats

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar High Court here Thursday dismissed the Sunni Itehad Council's (SIC) petition challenging the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) ruling that denied reserved seats to the party.

The five-member bench of PHC led by Chief Justice Mohammad Ibrahim Khan and comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar, Justice Ishaq Ibrahim, Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Arshad Ali dismissed the SIC petitions.

Earlier, during his arguments, SIC's lawyer Barrister Ali Zafar said the Constitution does not mention when a party has to

submit a list of names for reserved seats to the ECP. He argued that it is not written anywhere that a person cannot resubmit the list or when it has to be submitted, adding that there is no restriction on providing a second list and that the ECP could have issued a second schedule, as it did for the general elections.

Justice Ijaz Anwar remarked that as per the law, those who participate in elections will get seats. The court then questioned Barrister Zafar if it was not clearly stated anywhere that the second schedule could not be issued.



LARKANA: Members of Highways Workers Union are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Jinnah Bagh in Larkana.

## Administration imposes fines of Rs2.897 million on 192 illegal profiteers

KARACHI (APP): On the directives of Sindh Chief Minister, special price checking campaign continued on the third day of Ramzan and Karachi administration imposed fines of Rs2.897 million on 192 illegal profiteers while two shops were sealed as well.

According to a statement issued here on Thursday, fines of Rs1,802,000 were imposed on 53 illegal profiteers district South, fines of 357,000 on 18 profiteers in district East and fines of Rs113,000 were imposed on 19 profiteers in district West.

In district Central 49 illegal profiteers were fined Rs317,000, in district Malir 30 profiteers were fined Rs77,000, in district Korangi 11 profiteers were fined Rs115,000 and in district Keamari 12 illegal profiteers were fined Rs116,000.

Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput, who is monitoring the price checking campaign in the metropolis, said that administration and other relevant departments were taking action against illegal profiteering to provide relief to citizens in the month of Ramzan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif presided over meeting wherein he was given detailed briefing on role of Ministry of Aviation and its attached entities.

## Govt to start work on five new economic corridors: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (Online): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal has directed to expedite the implementation on CPEC project as no further hindrance will be tolerated.

He was chairing a meeting to initiate work on the five new corridors in the second phase of CPEC.

During the meeting, a comprehensive briefing was given to the minister on the progress of CPEC projects.

Planning Minister added that Gwadar is the best tourist destination, emphasizing the need for a solid and effective strategy to promote investment in Gwadar.

He also directed stakeholders to devise a strategy for increasing Pakistani exports in Chinese markets.

INP adds: Federal Minister for Planning, De-

velopment and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday chaired a meeting to expedite the implementation of the 5 Es Framework.

Decision to organize one day workshop was made during the meeting with top officials of the ministry, to gather recommendations from experts including from academia and the private sector, said press statement issued by the ministry.

Additionally, future agenda would also be devised for the implementation of the 5 Es (Export Energy, Equity, E-Pakistan, and Environment) Framework so that long-term policies can be formulated for implementation in these sectors.

The Ministry of Planning, under the leadership of Ahsan Iqbal had formu-

lated 5 Es Framework during the tenure of previous government which was also approved by the National Economic Council (NEC).

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Iqbal said that it was top responsibility of the Planning Commission to determine the economic and developmental priorities accurately.

He said that in order to move forward, there was need to increase revenues and boost exports. Additionally, he emphasized that traditional methods needed to be transcended for achieving progress on sustainable grounds.

He said, the entire Ministry of Planning will be shifted to a digital system in next six months adding it would fully activate the e-governance system.

Citing examples of Indian and Bangladesh, he re-

iterated that continuation of policies were prerequisites to lead the country towards stability and development. He said, Pakistan was currently facing economic challenges and highlighted the need to increase revenues and exports.

He said the principles of development have drastically changed worldwide as artificial intelligence, big data, and automation are taking the entire system towards new stability.

He emphasized that desired results of progress and development could not be achieved through traditional methods.

The Federal Minister for Planning stressed the importance of networking so that the best abilities of the entire nation can be utilized. He instructed officials to ensure top-level efficiency.

## Plan made to defeat PTI in vote recount: Omar Ayub

ISLAMABAD (INP): PTI senior leader Omar Ayub alleged that a plan was made to defeat them by recounting in 20 constituencies.

The PTI leader said that they wanted to bring their own people into the assembly to pass legislation of their choice. He claimed that their candidates were winning 202 seats.

## Kazi Nazir posted as IG Prisons Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Kazi Nazir, Deputy Inspector General Prisons and Correction Service (BS-20), Headquarters Karachi was transferred and posted as Inspector General Prisons and Correction Service with immediate effect. According to notification, Kazi Nazir was posted as IG Prisons vice Syed Munawar Ali Shah transferred and directed to report to Home department.

## Four students deprived of cash, cell phones

SUKKUR (INP): Armed robbers deprived four students of cash, cell phones and other valuables at gunpoint during broad daylight here on Thursday.

According to details, a group of students heading to home after attending classes at local university was intercepted by a three motorcycle riding robbers at Old National Highway in Abad police station jurisdiction in Sukkur.

The robbers took the students including Sahil Sachdeo, Manandil, Sunni Jagwani and Danish hostage at gunpoint and took away cash, cell phones and other valuables.

## Karachi police officers under investigation for alleged robbery

KARACHI (INP): Karachi's East Zone Police are investigating a robbery of Rs. 1 crore 18 lakh (approximately \$67,000 USD) allegedly committed by police officers themselves.

The incident occurred four days ago near the Lyari Expressway within the jurisdiction of Sachal police station. A police patrol stopped and searched a vehicle, reportedly stealing the large sum of money before fleeing the scene. Sindh Inspector General (IG) Police, Rifat Mukhtar Raja, promptly took notice of the situation and ordered DIG East, Azfar Mahesar, to launch a full investigation. A robbery case has been registered against unknown individuals at Sachal police station.

Evidence suggests the involvement of police officers and officials from Zaman Town police station in Korangi district.

## Interior Minister meets Sudi Ambassador in diplomatic enclave

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior & Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday arrived in diplomatic enclave to meet Nawaf Bin Saeed Ahmed Al Maliki, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia.

The ambassador congratulated Mohsin Naqvi on assuming the post of Minister for Interior.

He expressed his best wishes for the minister for his new responsibilities.

The ambassador appreciated the performance of Mohsin Naqvi for completing public projects in Punjab with exceptional speed and high quality in record time.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Ambassador Jiang Zaidong handed USD 100,000 emergency cash assistance to the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Mohamud Syrus Sajjad Qazi for rains affected areas in KP and Balochistan.

## Retik Kumar rescued after fight with the robbers

By Tanveer Ahmed Soomro

MIRPUR MATHELO: Joint action of police and Rangers, Hindu youth Retik Kumar, who was abducted one and a half months ago, was rescued after a fight with the robbers, other abductees will also be rescued soon, SSP

place. SHO Kuchu Bundi Bakht Ali Kalhoro on the same information When reached the designated place along with a heavy contingent of police and rangers, the bandits started firing indiscriminately on seeing the team of police and rangers.



Ghotki Muhammad Anwar Khetran,

According to the details, DSP Kuchu Bundi Zahid Hussain Mirani received information during the ongoing targeted operation in Kacha area that a group of robbers is moving the Hindu hostage Retik Kumar to a safe

Rangers and police immediately took the kidnapped youth Retik Kumar into protective custody, SSP Ghotki Muhammad Anwar Khetran said in SSP office Mirpur Mathele that Retik Kumar was killed by bandits near Ghotki one and a half months ago.



KARACHI: A large number of needy people are being served at Chhipa Head Office.

## Chairman IRSA Appointment: PM takes notice of concerns of Sindh govt

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has taken the notice of concerns of Sindh government regarding appointment of Chairman Indus River System Authority (IRSA).

Sindh Minister for Irrigation, Jam Khan Shoro stated on Thursday that Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah held a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and informed him about objections of provincial government on appointment of chairman IRSA.

## Sindh Food Minister meets DG SFA

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Minister Jam Khan Shoro on Thursday met Director General Sindh Food Authority (SFA) Agha Fakhar Hussain here.

Secretary Food Nasir Abbas Soomro and other officers were also present on this occasion.

The DG SFA briefed Jam Khan Shoro about the objectives and procedures of establishing the provincial food authority.

The Minister was also briefed about the measures taken for supply of adulteration-free food items to the masses.

Jam Khan Shoro appreciated the performance of SFA.

## Three bike lifters held in separate actions

KARACHI (INP): Three members of a bike lifter gang were arrested, stolen bike and hashish recovered in separate actions in different localities of Kimari district on Thursday.

According to SSP Kimari Arif Aslam Rao, in first action two bike lifters including Kamran and Adnan were apprehended with a stolen bike and 20 gram hashish.

In another action, a bike lifter Shawan Saeed was apprehended with stolen bike.

The detainees were handed over to Anti Vehicle Lifting Cell for further investigations.

## Man crushed to death

KARACHI (INP): A man was killed in hit and run accident in Malir area of Karachi on Thursday, rescue sources said.

According to details, an unknown vehicle ran over a pedestrian near Khokhra Par Ground. The man was killed on the spot in the accident and driver of the vehicle sped the scene.

The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem, identification and police after registering a case against unknown car driver started search for heirs of the deceased.

## Pak- Iran FTA to be finalized in upcoming visit of Iranian President: Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam on Thursday said that there is a strong possibility that the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will be finalized in the upcoming visit of the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan, which is likely to increase the mutual trade between the two countries.

The Ambassador of Iran who visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the invitation of President ICCI Mr Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri speaking on the occasion said that from the upcoming visit of the Iranian president to Pakistan, there will be several bilateral economic and trade agreements between the two countries, which will further strengthen the mutual eco-

nomie and trade relations and promote the bilateral business between the two countries.

Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam said that the current bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Iran is \$2.5 billion, which has increased by 11 percent in the last 11 months.

He said that the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline is a huge facility for the people of Pakistan on behalf of the government of Iran, which will benefit both the domestic and industrial sectors of Pakistan.

He said the principles of development have drastically changed worldwide as artificial intelligence, big data, and automation are taking the entire system towards new stability.

He emphasized that desired results of progress and development could not be achieved through traditional methods.

The Federal Minister for Planning stressed the importance of networking so that the best abilities of the entire nation can be utilized. He instructed officials to ensure top-level efficiency.



ISLAMABAD: Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Salman Al Khalifa called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Baber Sidhu Chief of the Air Staff Pakistan Air Force at Air Headquarters.

## Commander Bahrain National Guard calls on Air Chief

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Baber Sidhu here at Air Headquarters on Thursday and praised the exceptional professionalism of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) personnel and the remarkable progress achieved by the PAF.

During the meeting, various areas of shared interest aimed at bolstering government-to-government cooperation in the realm of emerging technologies emphasis on drone technology and collaboration within the Cyber and Networking domains were discussed, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

## DC for ensure sale of edible items at economical rates

SUKKUR (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Khairpur, Syed Ahmed Fawad on Thursday made a surprise visit to various markets and checked the violations of Ehtaram-e-Ramazan Ordinance, non-sticking of price list at prominent place and charging additional price of essential items.

He mentioned that the persons involved in fleecing the consumers would be dealt with an iron hand.

He directed the Assistant Commissioners (AC) to ensure sale of edible items



KARACHI: Anti encroachment operation in progress removed illegal encroachment during anti encroachment drive under the supervision of Karachi Development Authority (KDA), at Surjani Town Sector 13/7 in Karachi.

## KU seminar emphasizes AI learning to cope with future challenges

KARACHI (APP): The Seerat Chair of the University of Karachi (KU) in collaboration with the KU Arabic department arranged a seminar on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on job opportunities, entrepreneurship, and guidance of Seerah Taayyaba at the KU Audio Visual Center here on Thursday.

"We have entered the era of artificial intelligence and we must learn technology to cope with the challenges of the future", the President of the Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Professor Dr Zubair Ahmed Sheikh said this while addressing the conference.

He emphasized that knowledge is readily gained and applied through modern technology, which makes practical implementation much easier.

He said that the West is far ahead in its developmental journey but lost social values.

The KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi explained how developed nations worldwide have progressed beyond the dark ages by utilizing research originally done by Muslims.

He emphasized that knowledge is readily gained and applied through modern technology, which makes practical implementation much easier.