

# Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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## State of health and education sectors such a pathetic: CM vows to bring 60 reforms in Balochistan; announces to form reform committee in seven days

Mir Sarfraz Bugti says Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of Balochistan to be revised

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has vowed to bring at least 60 reforms in different departments of the province, and adding he announced to constitute a reform committee within week time.

While talking informally to the media persons at Balochistan Assembly on occasion of bi-elections of Senate on Thursday, the Chief Minister said that we are going to bring around 60 reforms in the province.

He said that the reform committee would be formed in seven days, which would present its report within two months.

The services of retired bureaucrats are being

sought for the reform committee.

He said that the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of the province would also be revised afresh.

The Chief Minister said that it is our endeavour to include such development works which may benefit the general public.

He regretfully pointed out that huge amount of Rs. 80 billions has been allocated for the health sector. However, the situation of health sector is such a pathetic despite huge spending, he added.

He said that we are going to work under Public-Private Partnership in the health sector. He said that situation and overall work-

ing of all the public sector hospitals would be improved.

He also said that we would improve the condition of our hospitals under the Sindh model.

He said that it is just a mockery with the poor people of Balochistan to spend Rs. 80 billion in health sector.

Similarly, billions of rupees are also spent on education sector, however, situation is not better in it, he maintained.

Referring the reform committee, the Chief Minister said that the recommendations of committee would be kept before the cabinet for its perusal. Until then, the cabinet would also be formed, he added.



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

## 61 MPAs cast vote in bi-election of Senate in Balochistan Assembly: Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, Mir Dostain Domki & Abdul Shakoor Ghaibzai elected as Senators in bi-elections

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP)'s Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)'s Mir Dostain Khan Domki and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)'s Abdul Shakoor Ghaibzai were elected as Senators in the bi-elections of Senate from Balochistan here on Thursday.

According to the Returning Officer and Provincial Election Commissioner, Muhammad Farid Afridi, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo secured 23 votes while Mir Dostain Domki and Abdul Shakoor Ghaibzai got 17 and 16 votes respectively.

The Balochistan Awami Party (BAP)'s Mobin Khilji got five votes in the bi-election of Senate.

Earlier, the polling for

## CM Balochistan congratulates newly elected Senators

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has congratulated the newly elected Senators from Balochistan as a result of the bi-elections held in the provincial assembly.

In a felicitation message issued here on Thursday, the Chief Minister expressed satisfaction over holding of the bi-elections of Senate in peaceful manner.

He said that the role of all political parties is very appreciable in maintaining Senate elections in peaceful and democratic manner.

Extending congratulations to the newly elected Senators, the Chief Minister hoped that they would raise voice for the rights of people.

He also hoped that the members of Senate would also play their role in making effective legislation for resolving the public issues.

## 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.

The meeting was informed in detail about the roadmap for economic progress and about proposed measures in important sectors including electricity, agriculture, livestock, exports, small and medium enterprises, taxes, information technology, small and medium enterprises, investment, and privatization.



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.

## 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 freezing 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 Sunnitah 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.

three general seats of Senate was held in the Balochistan's provincial assembly on Thursday.

The Provincial Election Commissioner, Muhammad Farid Afridi performed as the Returning Officer for the bi-election on Senate seats.

Continued on page 2

## Commander Bahrain National Guard called Chief of Naval Staff

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Salman Al Khalifa called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest including bilateral collaboration and regional security were discussed. The visiting dignitary appreciated and acknowledged Pakistan Navy's efforts and commitments in support of collaborative maritime security in the region. Both the leaders pledged to further strengthen and diversify the scope of existing bilateral defence relationship.

Pakistan and Bahrain enjoy brotherly relations and Navies of both countries cooperate and collaborate in maritime domain particularly in the field of training.

## 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.

## China gives 'Emergency Aid' to Pakistan for rain-hit areas

ISLAMABAD (APP): The People's Republic of China on Thursday provided "Emergency Aid" to the government of Pakistan for residents of the rain-hit areas in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"On March 14, the donation ceremony for emergency aid provided by the Chinese government to rain-hit areas in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan," said a news release.

On behalf of the Chinese government, Ambassador Jiang Zaidong handed \$100,000 emergency cash assistance over to the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Mohammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi.

"China hopes that this cash donation can provide timely and necessary assistance to the needy people."

## We have to benefit from modern science & technology for fast track development: Governor

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stressed the need to benefit from the modern science and technology for fast track development as our overall performance has been slowed down just because we couldn't benefit from the same.

The Governor said that it takes several months to pass an ordinary file in the government offices, which waste lot of precious time, energy and investment.

This also causes frustration among the common men for long time.

The Governor was speaking to the Vice Chancellor, University Turbat, Professor Dr Jan Muhammad who called on him here on Thursday.

He was appreciative of the initiative taken by University of Turbat about shifting traditional system on solar system and making the communication system digitalized. He said that improvement can be brought about in overall performance by promoting the spirit of teamwork.



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 Mohammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi for rains affected areas in KP and Balochistan.

## PHC dismisses petition of SIC seeking reserved seats

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar High Court here Thursday dismissed the Sunnitah 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 Shaeel 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. "The law does not prevent the Election Commission from issuing another schedule," the lawyer responded.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti cast his vote while polling for By-Senate Election at Balochistan Assembly.

## Pakistan takes strong exception to implementation of CAA by India

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 as-

sumption 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 Hindutva 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

Continued on page 2



QUETTA: MPAs casting votes during Senate bi-election in Balochistan Assembly

## Turkish academic collaboration with CUI to be strengthened further: Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Pakistan, Mehmet Pacaci has said that his country was keen to strengthen academic collaboration with COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) in research, faculty exchange and student mobility programmes.

The Envoy was speaking during meeting with officials of CUI and senior management here on Thursday. The meeting was also attended by Turkish alumni working at the university, and officials from the International Office.

The visit of ambassador served as an opportunity to revive the association between CUI and the Embassy of Turkey.

Both countries share a deep cultural and religious bond and have collaborated in the past through exchange programs like Mevlana and Erasmus+.

In his address, Rector CUI Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar said, "We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with Turkish counterparts in research, faculty exchange, and student mobility programs."

Dr. Junaid Zaidi, Founder Rector of CUI: "We need to transform our excellent research into tangible products, and Turkish collaboration can be instrumental in achieving this goal."

During the meeting, Dr. Hammad Omer, Head of the International Office, gave a short presentation highlighting the CUI's strengths, research output, and engagement with Turkey. He emphasized the need to develop concrete projects for collaboration in areas like research, faculty exchange, and student mobility, and come up with tangible outcomes beyond signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs).

He also underlined that we need to explore potential for joint ventures in

fields like commercialization of research, mathematics, computer science, and mountain research.

Following the presentation, Mehmet Pacaci, Ambassador of Turkey in his keynote address said "We need to move beyond signing MoUs and develop concrete projects that leverage the expertise and facilities on both sides."

Both sides agreed to identify specific academics and projects for future collaborations with renewed commitment to strengthen educational ties between CUI and Turkish institutions.

They also agreed to identify potential areas for collaboration in various academic disciplines. There was also an agreement to go for joint research projects and exchange programs in near future. The discussion ended up with formulation of establishing a working group to develop concrete action plan.



QUETTA: Former MPA Malik Naseer Shahwani meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

## PTI wants to work with all for country's economic development: Marwat

ISLAMABAD (APP): Member National Assembly (MNA) Sher Afzal Marwat on Thursday said that his party wanted to work together with all political parties for the country's economic development and progress amid prevailing pressing circumstances.

Talking to media outside the Parliament House, he stated that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had allowed his party's leaders and lawmakers to meet the former party chairman in Adiyala Jail of Rawalpindi, which was banned by the

## Shariah Board Pakistan sets minimum Sadaqah Fitr, Fidyah at Rs300 for Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Shariah Board Pakistan, Sheikh Al-Hadith Professor Dr. Mufti Muhammad Zafar Iqbal Jalali Thursday announced that the minimum Sadaqah Fitr and Fidyah for fasting this year was set at Rs 300 per person, roughly equivalent to two kilograms of wheat flour.

In a statement, he emphasized the importance of philanthropists and affluent individuals contributing Sadaqah Fitr and Fidyah in accordance with their financial capacity, with values set at Rs 600 for oats, Rs 2,400 for dates, and Rs 4,400 for raisins.

Similarly, he outlined the Fidyah rates for fasting the entire month of Ramadan, which are Rs 9,000 for wheat flour, Rs 18,000 for oats, Rs 72,000 for dates, and Rs 132,000 for raisins.

Dr. Jalali clarified that Fidyah for fasting was intended for individuals who were chronically ill or unable to fast with no prospect of recovery.

Travelers and those temporarily unable to fast were obligated to make up for missed fasts, as Fidyah could not be a substitute for abstaining from fasting, he maintained.

## Kh Asif welcomes improving ties between Center, KP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Thursday said that it is a good sign that the federation and the provinces are jointly solving problems of the people.

Speaking to the media in the Parliament House on Thursday, Khawaja Asif, in an apparent reference to Wednesday's meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, said that it was certainly a step in the right direction.

He further said that instead of depending on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government should put its own house in order first. "If everything goes well, there is no need to go to the IMF," Khawaja Asif said.



ISLAMABAD: President Ida Rieu Schools, Ms Nadira Punjwani (HISD) briefs the press at the Inaugural Ceremony of COMSTech-Ida Rieu Schools for the Blind and Deaf Special Education Teacher's Training Programme at COMSTech auditorium.

## Pakistan takes strong exception...

*Continued from page 1*

agenda of transforming India into Hindu Rashtra.

She advised the Indian authorities to stop pre-choseographed 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. She urged India to take action to protect its own minorities especially Muslims who, she said, are in a very difficult situation because of rising Hinduism.

The spokesperson strongly condemned the Indian decision to declare illegal Kashmiri National Front in illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. With this, a total of nine Kashmiri political parties have been outlawed in IIOJK.

She said such oppressive measures reflect a vicious intent by India to stifle dissent and freedom of ex-

## Bid to smuggle 9kg narcotics to Sharjah foiled, two brothers held

PESHAWAR (INP): The Airport Security Force foiled a bid to smuggle drugs worth millions of rupees abroad and arrested two brothers at Peshawar Airport on Thursday.

The ASF on a tip-off searched the luggage of two brothers leaving for Sharjah through private airline flight.

During search, 9 kilogram drugs worth millions of rupees were recovered from secret cavities and both accused were arrested.

The detainees along with recovered drugs were handed over to the ANF authorities for further investigations.

Earlier, the airport security force also foiled a drug smuggling attempt from Sialkot and recovered 1 kg of ice heroin from a passenger of a Bahrain-bound flight.

According to the authorities, the staff foiled the smuggling attempt by recovering drugs during the search of the goods.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti talking with mediapersons after Senate bi-elections

## 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 as 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. "Everybody says he wants to meet the former prime minister," he added. The court, however, ordered him to let the lawyers, whose names were on the list, meet Imran.

## Night Football Tournament kicks off with thrilling matches

QUETTA (APP): All Balochistan Haji Yousuf Khilji Ramazan Night Football Tournament started at Helper High School Satellite Town last night.

The opening match was played between Young Nausar Football Club Quetta versus Great Hazara Football Club Quetta.

Speaking on the occasion, the special guest of the match Haji Muhammad Yousuf Khalji emphasized the global popularity of football, calling it the national game of the world. He highlighted the enthusiasm for the sport in Pakistan particularly in Quetta, noting the region's strong talent pool.

Following a match, a special guest presented a donation of 0.3 million rupees to the tournament committee.

Additionally, the guest announced financial rewards for the winning team, runner-up team, and tournament referees, totaling sixty thousand rupees for the winners and forty thousand rupees each for the others.

Tournament officials, including Chairman Haji Muhammad Naseem Khan Achakzai, Secretary Inamullah Khan Achakzai, and Press Secretary Bashir Ahmed Barich, expressed their gratitude towards the special guest for their support.

## 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 re-counting 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.

Ayub further said that the mandate was stolen and they were protesting against it. "We are going to the Supreme Court on this," he said.

Talking about the IMF programme, he said that there would be a flood of inflation in the country and poor people would become poorer.



KARACHI: US Navy Ship USS INDIANAPOLIS, Freedom Class Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) visited Karachi Port. Upon arrival at Karachi.

## Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, Mir Dostain... Continued from page 1

At the outset, process of polling was completed smoothly and peacefully with no interruption in the House.

In all 61 members of the assembly cast their votes in favour of the candidates contesting bi-elections of Senate from the province.

The MPA belonging to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Ravi Pahuja was the first among the members who cast vote for the bi-elections. He was followed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Awami National Party's Zamarak Khan Achakzai, Ms. Rubaba Buledi, Zafar Agha, Nawab Sanaulah Zehri and others.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti cast his vote for the bi-polls of Senate at 17th in the row. Similarly, the Speaker Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, Deputy Speaker Ms. Ghazala Golan, Nawab Aslam Raisani, Nawab Jangez Marri, Ms. Rahila Hameed Durrani and others also used their right of franchise for senate bi-elections.

While the BNP-Awami's member assembly, Mir Asadullah Baloch didn't cast his vote.

It may be mentioned here that in all seven candidates were in competition run for the bi-elections on three seats of the Senate from Balochistan.

They were included: Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo of PPP, Mir Dostain Domki of PML-N, Kohda Babar and Mobin Khilji of Balochistan Awami Party and Abdul Shakoor of JUI.

Two more candidates including Syed Mehmood Shah and Mir Hairbiyar Domki contested the election as independent candidates.

These seats had fallen vacant due to resignations of the senators Anwaarul Haq Kakar, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti and Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri.

All the three successful candidates would serve as the Senators till March 2027.

## 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.



QUETTA: Additional Secretary Arif Achakzai, CEO Balochistan Institute of Nephrology Urology Quetta BINUQ Prof Dr Syed Liatat Agha participating in World Kidney Day awareness' rally.

## PM withdraws appointment of IRSA chairman over Sindh's concerns

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has withdrawn the appointment notification of the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) chairman.

PM Shehbaz has taken notice of the Sindh government's reservations over the IRSA chairman's appointment.

Earlier, Sharif appointed Zafar Mahmood, a grade 22 officer, IRSA chairman.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah held telephonic discussion on the matter after which the premier decided to withdraw the notification.

The Sindh chief minister informed PM Shehbaz over the reservations the province had on the IRSA chairman's appointment. He said the federal government could not appoint the officer.

## German Envoy calls on Chairman PRCS

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Alfred Grannas praised the advancements made by PRCS under Chairman Laghari's guidance in easing the plight of vulnerable communities and underscored the long-standing partnership between PRCS and the German Red Cross, which has endured for four decades.

Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, expressed his appreciation for Ambassador Grannas's sincere concern for the people of Pakistan and his commitment to addressing humanitarian needs. He emphasized the importance of the Ambassador's visit in broadening avenues of cooperation for the betterment of vulnerable communities.

[Islamabad, 14th March 2024]- The Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, His Excellency Alfred Grannas, reiterated the paramount importance of humanitarian service during his meeting with Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) at the PRCS



ISLAMABAD: German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas meet Chairman Red Crescent Pakistan Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari.

**VACANCIES ANNOUNCEMENT**

Applications are invited for initial recruitment to the following posts in the Balochistan Healthcare Commission (BHCC).

Job Title	No. of Position	Age Limit / Qualification / Experience
Dispatch Rider	1	25-35 years, Matric.
Electrician	1	25-35 years, matric along with diploma in relevant field
Plumber	1	25-35 years, matric, along with diploma in relevant field
Security Guard	2	25-35 years, middle
Chowkidar	2	25-35 years
Peon	5	25-35 years
Cook	2	25-35 years
Driver	4	25-35 years, Fitness certificate with Driving License
Sweepers	2	25-35 years

**Terms & Conditions:** - i) Preference shall be given to Local / domicile of the province. ii) The appointments will be made purely on contract basis. iii) Application along with attested educational and relevant documents, CNIC and (3) recent photographs can submit at address: -House No. C-56 Railway Housing Society, Joint Road, Quetta. iv) Only short-listed candidates will be called for test / interview. v) No TA / DA will be admissible for test / interview. vi) The remunerations will be paid according to Balochistan Healthcare Commission policy. vii) The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the applications without assigning any reason. viii) The last date of submission of applications is 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 office time and no application will be accepted after due date and time.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
BALOCHISTAN HEALTHCARE  
COMMISSION QUETTA**

AB No: 325/14-3-2024  
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**TENDER NOTICE**

**TSE-232403382303 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER II PROVINCIAL B&R SHERANI invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2024 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates.**

**TENDER FEE RS.1000/- AND BID SECURITY 2%**

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	Construction of BHU Killi Adilabad U/C Ahmadi Darga District Sherani-PSDP#3519 (2023-24)	15,000,000/-

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of at least 10,500,000 PKR Amount in 100 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm. Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-6 and above (Upto 25 million) In Relevant Category And Specialized Code is CE06 (Tunneling and underpinning).

**Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed, 1,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 29 March, 2024 during office hours on working days. **Last Date of bid submission:** The Tenders must be submitted latest by 29 March, 2024 till 12:00 PM. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 01:00 PM Address: Executive Engineer Building, Communication, Works, PP&H Department Sherani Phone no: 0822412218

**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (BUILDING)  
CW, PP&H DEPARTMENT  
SHERANI**

PRQ No.1618/14-3-2024  
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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Pakistan, Ambassador Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al-Khater calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

**Defence Minister casts his vote in Senate by polls**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister Defence and Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Thursday cast his vote in the Senate by elections being held on six vacant seats of the Upper House of the Parliament. The voting process for by-elections on six vacant Senate seats was underway here at the Parliament House.

The members of the National Assembly and provincial assemblies of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will elect six senators in the by-polls, whereas the voting would continue till 4pm. The six senate slots got vacant after the senators got elected to the national and provincial assemblies.

**PM lauds Qatar's contribution to peace efforts in Gaza**

ISLAMABAD (Online): Ambassador of Qatar Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al-Khater called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Thursday.

Shehbaz Sharif thanked Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani for their warm messages of felicitations on his re-election as Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan is proud of its close, fraternal relationship with Qatar, with bilateral ties having the potential to grow even stronger and meaningful, particularly in the areas of economy, trade and investment.

He highlighted that the Special Investment Facilitation Council that was established during his previous tenure as Prime Minister, is now functioning as an efficient and productive mechanism. It is ensuring that foreign investors are able to benefit from investment opportunities in Pakistan's key sectors like agriculture, Information Technology, mining and minerals as well as renewable energy.

The Prime Minister lauded Qatar's contribution to peace efforts in Gaza. He said it is disappointing that violence is continuing in Gaza even during the holy month of Ramadan.

Shehbaz Sharif fondly recalled his official visits to Qatar in August 2022 and March 2023. He extended an invitation to the Amir of Qatar to undertake an official visit to Pakistan and said the people of Pakistan look forward to welcoming him in the near future. The Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister and said he would do his best to foster stronger ties between the two countries.

**Planning Minister directs stakeholders to hold 'consultative workshop'**

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Planning Ministry has geared up efforts to implement the 5Es framework, a multi-pronged strategy to turnaround Pakistan and put it on a sustained growth trajectory.

On the direction of the Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal a one-day consultative workshop will be organized at the ministry within ten days for the speedy implementation of the framework.

and infrastructure and equity and empowerment. The framework marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's journey towards sustainable economic growth and development as it has set the stage for transformative change, addressing key challenges and capitalizing on opportunities for the betterment of the nation and its citizens. In June last year, National Economic Council NEC had approved the framework.

The first E, aimed at increasing exports as the country's future heavily depended upon how fast it became an export-led economy. This E in particular focuses on initiatives that will tackle the chronic boom-and-bust cycles and stabilize the economy.

get interventions to ensure accessible and high-quality health, education, and social protection services for all citizens."

Commenting on the country's current challenge of inherited debt, Minister Ahsan Iqbal lamented the burden placed on Pakistan by the previous governments. Despite this challenge, he expressed confidence in the government's ability to overcome obstacles and lead the nation towards economic stability.

During the meeting, the Planning Minister underscored the need to adopt innovative financing mechanisms, especially considering the limited space in Pakistan's economic condition to ensure a strong infrastructure.

**SC issues written order regarding hearing in Monal Restaurant case**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday issued a written order regarding hearing on a case pertaining to the lease of land of Monal Restaurant.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa has conducted hearing on the case on March 11.

The court said that the 15 year lease agreement completed on March 9, 2021 and a further 15 year lease was to be granted as per the agreement.

RF&V. The CDA's lawyer adopted the stance that the restaurant couldn't sign an agreement with for someone else for the land lease. He stated that the land of Monal Restaurant was owned by Capital Development Authority (CDA).

The court instructed the federal government to submit detail report regarding the ownership of the land. The court also sought the relevant original record of the said land from the concern authorities.

The further hearing of the case was then adjourned till March 21.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada chairs a meeting of Pakistan Public Works Department at Ministry. Dr. Shahzad Khan Bangash, Secretary Housing and Works, Chief Engineers of all zones and other senior officers of the ministry are also present.

**IHC allows 4 PTI lawyers to meet PTI founder**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has directed the jail authorities of Adiala on Thursday to allow four lawyers from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to meet the PTI founder.

Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the application against the order of the Punjab government pertaining to the ban on meeting with the detained PTI founder at Adiala jail.

Superintendent of Adiala Jail, Asad Warraich, argued before the court that a number of people were pretending to be defense counsels of the PTI founder and wanted to meet him.

He stated that more than twenty defense counsels attended the proceedings and claimed they wanted to meet the PTI founder, which was the root of the actual problem, the superintendent clarified.

**Pakistan envoy, Nepalese FM discuss bilateral ties, cooperation**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to Nepal Ahrar H Hashmi on Thursday called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Nepal Narayan Kaji Shreshtha.

He felicitated the foreign minister on assuming the office and conveyed the best wishes of the Pakistani leadership, according to a press release.

In the meeting, they also discussed the full spectrum of bilateral relations and emphasised the need for enhanced engagement in diverse fields, as well as exchanges and cooperation in regional and international forums.

**Pirzada directs to improve construction work of govt buildings, roads**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada Thursday directed to implement strict measures aimed at improving construction work and enhancing maintenance services of government buildings and roads.

ment. During the meeting, the minister was apprised about the management and working of the department by Abdul Rasheed, Director General, Pak PWD.

He was chairing a meeting of Pakistan Public Works Department (PWD) at Ministry, addressing critical issues concerning construction standards, maintenance, repair of buildings, and tackling corruption within the department.

Riaz Pirzada expressed concern over reports of corruption and underscored the imperative of eradicating corrupt practices to foster transparency and accountability within the department.

In this regard, the minister issued clear directives to the DG PWD to enforce a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption.

**PM dedicated to took country forward on path of progress: Qaiser**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Thursday reiterated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's commitment to Pakistan's rapid development and asked the opposition parties to work with the government to provide relief to the common man.

criticism" will guide the government in framing "prudent policies".

He said that it is our collective responsibility to make decisions in parliament in favor of the common people to bring improvement in national institutions. The minister said that the priority of the government is to get the country out of the current crisis.

Talking to the PTV news channel, the minister stressed that our primary focus is to increase province revenue, business growth, and economy boost and to build confidence for investors where the opposition's role is very crucial as its "constructive

Replying to a question, he emphasized the need for a solid and effective strategy to promote investment in Gwadar, adding, that the government will work to revamp and operationalize the Pakistan National Shipping Line to enable the institution.

**CDA for providing best civic facilities to citizens**

ISLAMABAD (APP): To improve the road infrastructure in the city of Islamabad work on several projects is continuing by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) so the citizens could be provided best civic facilities.

On this occasion, the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) while issuing instructions to the officers of the concerned departments, said that such footpaths, which are dilapidated, should be repaired as soon as possible.

In this regard, under the direction of Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), a new footpath is being constructed in Sector I-8 of Islamabad, which will be completed at a cost of 14 million rupees.

Similarly, wherever there is a need to build new footpaths, new footpaths should also be constructed so that all possible facilities can be provided to the citizens. Similarly, the construction of these footpaths will not only promote the culture of walking in the city, but also significantly reduce the carbon and footprint.

In this regard, tenders have also been published in newspapers. It should be noted that after the scrutiny of the received bids, the construction of the footpath will be started soon.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of women standing in a long queue and waiting for their turn to purchase wheat flour on subsidized price provided by government in the city.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people attending Iftar arranged by an NGO at Ghouri Town.

**AIOU reschedules postponed exams in Chitral**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has rescheduled the postponed papers in Chitral region.

Due to snowfall in Lower Chitral, schools and colleges were closed from 5 to 9 March and exams were postponed. According to the notification issued by the examination department, the exams of March 5 will be held on April 16.

**IHC seeks comments from mobile companies in audio leak case**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday sought written comments from telecom operator companies in audio leaks identical cases filed by Bushra Bibi and Najam-u-Saqib.

Justice Babar Sattar heard the cases. The counsel for mobile companies adopted the stance that they give the access system to the PTA. The authority could answer in a better way regarding the taping of the phone calls.

The court remarked that four federal secretaries have submitted their affidavits before it if someone has lied before the court he has to face the consequences. The court was told that the government never allowed any institution to record the conversations of citizens.

**PMDC drafts new accreditation standards**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) has prepared new upgraded drafts for accreditation standards.

several important purposes, each of which will ultimately benefit both students and the healthcare system.

He said that after extensive hard work all these medical dental accreditation standards, rules and regulations have been forwarded Academic Board Committee for deliberation and approval.

He said that accreditation standards will improve the system of licensure and certification, ensuring graduates meet the necessary educational requirements to practice dentistry safely and competently.

He said that the ultimate goal of designing these standards is to produce competent, well-rounded dental professionals who can meet patients' oral health needs and contribute positively to the dental profession.

Scholarship Fund and Trust Rules, PM&DC Finance Rules, M&DC Examination Regulations, Amendment to Admissions Regulations, PM&DC Student Registration Regulations, 2024.

It is need of time as PM&DC is responsible for regulating medical and dental education, practice, and related matters in Pakistan.

Its Powers and Functions Rules should ensure medical and dental colleges to adhere specific standards of education, faculty qualifications, infrastructure, and curriculum.

These accreditation standards will set high standards for the quality of education provided by medical colleges, including faculty qualifications, curriculum content, teaching methods, facilities, and resources.

These standards ensure that students receive high-quality education that meets specific quality and rigor standards, protecting them from investing time and money in substandard programs.

With these accredited standards, medical colleges will be able to provide stu-

He said that accreditation standards for medical colleges at the undergraduate level will serve

He said that accreditation standards will improve the system of licensure and certification, ensuring graduates meet the necessary educational requirements to practice dentistry safely and competently.

He said that the ultimate goal of designing these standards is to produce competent, well-rounded dental professionals who can meet patients' oral health needs and contribute positively to the dental profession.

He said that PM&DC has also devised the drafts of PM&DC Powers and Functions Rules, PM&DC Code of Ethics of Professional Conduct, PM&DC Licensing Regulations, PM&DC National Medical

PM&DC Code of Ethics of Professional Conduct promotes professionalism, integrity, and patient-centered care and it was a dire need to prepare an upgraded code of ethics to safeguard the doctors.

PM&DC Licensing Regulations will improve the process of issuing licenses to practitioners.

**Two wanted dacoits arrested, cash recovered**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) on Thursday arrested two wanted members of a snatcher gang involved in numerous criminal activities and recovered booty from their possession.

**21 outlaws netted, narcotics, weapons seized**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 21 outlaws including nine professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered narcotics and weapons from their possession.

A public relations officer said that following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified its crackdown against the criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Noon police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of the snatcher gang involved in numerous criminal activities.

While the police team also arrested two accused namely Gul Agha and Noman Fayyaz involved in illegal gas refilling.

Likewise, the Golra police team arrested an accused Farhad Ullah, and recovered 10 liters liquor from his possession. The Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Sher Ali and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession. Similarly, the Khanna police team arrested two accused Israr Ahmed and Muhammad Altaf involved in illegal gas refilling. The Koral police team arrested an accused Fakhar Abbas and recovered 615 gram hashish from his possession.

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**Economic agenda**

On Tuesday, at his first formal interaction with reporters after assuming control of Q Block, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb dropped some clear hints about the kind of financial policies he intends to pursue, at least in the short to medium term.

Signalling the continuation of IMF-mandated stabilisation policies under the \$3bn Standby Arrangement, the former banker said that Pakistan, a sovereign, nuclear state, could no longer afford to continue with a 'patchwork' approach to deep-rooted economic woes if it wanted to address the challenge posed by low economic growth and inflation.

He was also clear about the Sharif government's plan to kick-start discussions for a new, larger and longer IMF loan during the international lender's visit for the second and final review of the current nine-month facility that ends soon.

"We would at least kick-start the process and get this going. Let us see how they respond," he said. Further negotiations on the fresh programme would be taken forward on the sidelines of the spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank in April in Washington, it was mentioned.

The finance minister's message was unmistakable: the government is aiming for permanent macroeconomic stabilisation even if it comes at the cost of growth. He said that the country should not expect cash deposits and debt rollovers from friendly countries, and that it was necessary to achieve the structural benchmarks laid out in IMF programmes signed by Pakistan's previous finance ministers, as turning to patchwork measures was no solution. Inflation, he stressed, could only be addressed by achieving macroeconomic stability. Faced with a daunting challenge, the minister's prescription for the interlinked issues of low growth, balance-of-payment troubles, inflation and fiscal deficit afflicting the economy indicate a plan for a consequential overhaul of the government as well as its budget over the next several years. His plan also represents a significant departure from the PML-N's signature economic and financial policies.

The question is: will he get enough room to execute the stabilisation policies for as long as it is required? What is the guarantee that the ruling party will support his attempts to effectively tax its core political constituency of retailers or the powerful real estate mafia? Last but not the least, how long will the government resist the temptation of spurring growth without executing the long-standing structural reforms once forex reserves rise to a comfortable level, as it panders to its vote bank?

Indeed, the new army-backed SIFC created last year to attract investment from the Gulf nations is widely expected to help him. Still, the success of the finance minister's stabilisation agenda will hinge largely on his ability to manage the desires and demands of the party in power, without digressing from the path of reform.

**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 inau-

gural 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 PTI.

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 bil-

lion 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 fami-

lies 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.

**The enactment of CAA - Modi's pre-election political maneuver**

By Maria Mansab

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has enacted the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which aims to expedite the process of granting citizenship to religious minority individuals from neighboring countries, except Muslims. The law provides evidence that Modi's authoritarian regime is attempting to convert India into a Hindu-majority state and marginalize its 200 million Muslim population.

To aid those who are persecuted, CAA will permit non-Muslim religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan to apply for citizenship. In 2019, the law was enacted, inciting widespread demonstrations that resulted in the deaths of dozens and the apprehension of countless others. According to the country's Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah, "PM Modi had delivered on another commitment and realized the promise of the makers of our constitution to the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians living in those countries." It is clear from the statement above that the implementation of this law is discriminatory in nature as it excludes Muslims.

In the run-up to this year's general elections, the enactment of the CAA is a significant electoral pledge of Modi Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This action is a strategic political move employed by the autocratic government of Modi for their election campaign.

According to Amnesty International, the law is "discriminatory" and "goes against the constitutional values of equality and international human rights law." It states that the law "legitimizes discrimination based on religion" and

is "exclusionary in its structure and intent."

For instance, this law does not protect individuals escaping mistreatment in non-Muslim majority countries, such as Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka. Additionally, it fails to account for the inclusion of Rohingya Muslim refugees who have fled from Myanmar.

The 200 million Muslims in the nation could face persecution if the CAA is used in conjunction with a planned national registry of citizens. Its enactment two to three days before the election announcement, following repeated extensions in the previous four years, indicates that it is being done for political purposes. Another example of Modi's flagrant lying is the length of time it took to announce the CAA guidelines. The sole purpose of the CAA is to target Muslims; it has no other intent. Modi is actively promoting a Hindu nationalist agenda that poses a threat to the country's secular foundation, restricts the rights of religious minorities, especially Muslims, and brings India closer to being a Hindu nation.

In addition, during the Modi-fascist rule, a significant number of Muslims were subjected to lynching by Hindu mobs based on accusations of consuming beef or engaging in cow smuggling. Muslim businesses have faced economic boycotts, their localities have been demolished, and places of worship have been intentionally set on fire. Moreover, there have been public calls for the genocide of Muslims. Modi's conspicuous silence over the anti-Muslim violence has empowered his most radical followers and facilitated an increase in hate speech targeting

Muslims.

The United Nations Human Rights panel on March 7, 2024, expressed concern, on reports of assaults on minority groups, media outlets, and civil society in India. The panel urged immediate measures to address these issues, particularly since the country is gearing up for early 2024 elections. Furthermore, they expressed strong disapproval of the inadequate degree of response from India to their messages. They observed that out of the 78 communications sent by UN human rights experts between 7 March 2019 and 6 March 2024, only 18 received public replies from the Government.

The experts urged the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to persistently observe the developing human rights situation in India. They also called on the Human Rights Council to deliberate on potential actions that could help prevent human rights abuses in the country, under its responsibilities outlined in General Assembly resolution 60/251.

Under Modi's ethno-religious policies, the Indian government hindered its goal of becoming a global leader in a democracy that respects human rights. This was due to its consistent implementation of laws and actions that unfairly treat and stigmatize religious and other minority groups, as stated in the 2024 World Report by Human Rights Watch.

A m n e s t y International's report in February 2024 states that India must immediately cease its extensive illegal demolitions of

homes, businesses, and places of worship belonging to Muslims, which are being carried out using JCB bulldozers. The JCB brand machinery has been utilized as a weapon in a hate campaign against Muslims, naming it as Jihad Control Board Bulldozers. Global experts on genocide have declared that the Indian government has supervised the genocide and India is currently in stage 10 of a genocide against Muslims.

Under Modi's fascist dictatorship, India's Press Freedom Index ranking fell to its lowest point in history in 2023 (161 out of 180 countries). Freedom House, a US based democracy watchdog, downgraded India from a free democracy to a "partially free democracy." Similarly, the Swedish-based V-Dem Institute described the country as an "electoral autocracy." These numbers show that, under the Modi government, censorial nationalism jeopardizes free speech. The implementation of CAA by the Modi regime has been driven by political motives, particularly aimed at garnering support for the 2024 elections. It reflects a concerning trend towards discriminatory policies that marginalize Muslims. This, coupled with reports of attacks on minorities, suppression of press freedom, and erosion of democratic institutions, underscores the need for urgent corrective action to uphold India's secular values and ensure the protection of all citizens' rights.

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**Gender parity**

Shazia Nizamani

Pakistan ranks low on the Gender Gap Index in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, 2023. On women's political empowerment, it ranked 95<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries, with only a handful of women occupying senior, managerial, policy- and decision-making posts. The main factors preventing women from achieving gender parity in politics are a patriarchal system, systemic gender discrimination, socioeconomic disparity, and hidebound cultural norms.

The Constitution is clear that "there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone" and that "steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life". Besides, Pakistan is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which obligates governments to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life", including in elections. Pakistan's women constitute almost half of the population, but their share in parliament is just 20 per cent. The gender gap also exists among voters.

Women's participation and representation in the political process is a fundamental principle of democracy, and it is a prerequisite for gender-sensitive and gender-responsive governance. Ensuring the latter is only possible by increasing the number of women in policy- and decision-making positions and providing them with a conducive and women-friendly environment. According to UN Women, "in the last 25 years, women's political representation has doubled globally. Even then, more than three-quarters of seats in parliament

are still held by men". Pakistan is making small but significant efforts to narrow the gender gap in the country's political process. For instance, reforms were introduced in the Elections Act, 2017, to address some of the concerns pertaining to women's exclusion from the electoral process, and to ensure their active participation, which included mandating that at least five per cent of each political party's nominated candidates for elections be women; election results be nullified in any constituency where women's turnout was below 10pc; etc. The Election Commission of Pakistan first released gender-disaggregated turnout statistics in the 2018 election.

According to a voter turnout assessment report by the Free and Fair Election Network (FaFen), which was released soon after the general election last month, "the targeted initiatives have reduced the overall gender gap on the voter rolls between male and female voters from 12.4 million in 2018 to 9.9m in 2024".

However, women's turnout remained 43pc as compared to 52pc for males. The major political parties had nominated 280 women candidates, representing 4.64pc of the total 6,037 candidates, while the number of independent women candidates was 614. Twenty-seven women candidates won national and provincial seats in the general elections.

Fafen said: "According to the available data, as many as 24.05 women cast their votes in 254 NA constituencies as compared to 34.02 men in the same constituencies" and that "as many as 2.3m more women turned out to vote in 2024 as compared to 2018, when 21.7m women had cast their votes". -- Courtesy Dawn



## 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 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.

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 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

Armellin, the meeting served as a platform for strategic discussions and collaborative efforts, said a press release.

Marilina Armellin 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.



ISLAMABAD: French Deputy Head of Mission (Guillaume Dabouis) calls on Minister for Petroleum & Power, Dr. Musadiq Masood Malik.

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

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan's seafood exports to China increased by 13% 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).

This growth can be attributed to various

factors, such as improved trade relations between the two countries, participation in the China Fisheries & Seafood Expo held in Qingdao last year by a large group of Pakistani fisheries companies, and the implementation of efficient supply chain management strategies in the Pakistani seafood industry. This positive development has contributed to the overall economic growth and strengthened the ties between Pakistan and China, the counsellor elaborated.

Qadir informed China Economic Net (CEN) that, according to GACC, exports of frozen fish (commodity code 03038990) crossed \$60.63 million in 2023. Fresh/ chilled crabs (commodity code 03063399) saw an increase to \$42.59 million, up from \$27.26 million.

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## State Minister for IT briefed on NITB, PSEB programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): CEO National Information Technology Board (NITB) Babar Majeed Bhatti briefed the chair about the organizational structure and projects of NITB.

The meeting was also apprised about the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) working and programs. The PSEB authorities told the meeting that over 6,000 IT companies are registered with the Board, and a total of 43 software technology parks (STPs) have been established throughout the country. Currently, 357 IT/IT companies are working in these STPs.

Secretary IT Hassan Nasir Jamy, Additional Secretary Aisha Humera Moriani, and senior officers of the Ministry of IT were present at the meeting.

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## Railways announce ticket booking office hour in Ramazan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has announced the ticket booking office hours during the holy month of Ramazan-ul-Mubarak to facilitate the passengers.

According to the spokesmen of Pakistan Railways, the ticket booking offices would be open from 8 am to 1 pm Monday through Thursday during the first 15 days of the holy month.

The spokesmen said the travelers could book tickets for the afternoon shift Monday through Friday between 1 and 6 pm.

He said there would be a Friday prayer break from 12:30 to 2:00 pm. To facilitate the passenger, he said after the 15th of Ramazan, the reservation office would be open till 9 pm with Iftar break.

## Rupee gains 01 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Thursday gained 01 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.77 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.78.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.9 and Rs 281.6, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 42 paisa to close at Rs 304.89 against the last day's closing of Rs 304.47, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.88.



PESHAWAR: Youngster busy in washing alloy rims before selling at his workplace near Shoba Bazar.

## Shafay reviews implementation on Ramadan Relief Package

Independent Report LAHORE: Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain chaired the meeting of ministerial committee formed regarding the monitoring of Ramadan relief package, held at the Civil Secretariat.

Provincial Ministers Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman, Bilal Yasin, Azma Bokhari, Ashiq Hussain Kirmani and the concerned secretaries attended the meeting. While the divisional commissioners participated in the meeting through video link.

In the meeting, implementation of Ramadan package, availability of essential

items, prices and monitoring process were reviewed and the proposal for establishing trucking points for the sale of tomato was agreed. The pilot project of making trucking points will be started from Lahore. It was also decided to increase shopping counters in Ramadan and model markets for the convenience of the people.

Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain while addressing the meeting said that on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, delivery of Ramadan package is going on at people's doorsteps.

## Implementation of 5 Es Framework accelerated

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development 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

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, LNGC Fuwairit, Khairpur and Spar Oceans, carrying LNG, Gasoline and Coal, berthed at PGPCL Terminal, FOCTO Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile another ship Trans Sprig with Steel Coil also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim on Thursday.

A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Olympia, Maersk Cape Town and Rhine left the Port on today morning, while two more ships, Eagle and Khairpur are expected to sail Thursday afternoon. Cargo volume of 168,741 tonnes, comprising 132,836 tonnes imports cargo and 35,905 tonnes export cargo carried in 3039 Containers.

## Ghee manufacturers announce reduction of Rs 15 per kg in ghee price

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain on Thursday chaired a meeting in which the delegation led by Vice Chairman of Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association, Muneeb Mannu, announced a reduction of Rs 15 per kg in the prices of ghee across Punjab, which would be applicable from today.

On this occasion, Minister Shafay Hussain said that he welcomes the decision of ghee manufacturers to reduce the prices in the holy

## PSX turns bullish, gains 1,015 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 1,015.82 points, a positive change of 1.59, closing at 65,064.27 points against 64,048.44 points the previous trading day.

A total of 315,247,601 shares valuing Rs.10,487 billion were traded during the day as compared to 252,751,968 shares valuing Rs.9,247 billion the last day.

Some 336 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 248 of them recorded gains and 72 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 16 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 42,747,519 shares at Rs 1.35 per share, Cnergyco PK with 36,111,224 shares with 5.09 per share and Kohinoor Spinning with 19,583,000 shares at Rs 4.79 per share.

Mari Petroleum Company Limited.

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LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Trade and Industry Chaudhry Shafay Hussain presiding over a meeting of Ramzan Package Monitoring Ministerial Committee

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## 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



People wait for a bus next to electronic screens on the facade of a building showing an image of Russian President Vladimir Putin and a quote from his address to the Federal Assembly, in Moscow, Russia.

## 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, Tuesday marked a crystallizing mo-

## 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.

## Famine stalks Sudan in second Ramazan plagued by war

**Monitoring Desk**  
PORT SUDAN: Sudan this week entered its second straight Ramazan in the throes of a deadly war that has left much of the country gripped by the spectre of famine.

"Ramazan? We've been doing that for months!" said Khartoum resident Othman Idriss, referring to the daytime fast observed by the faithful during the Muslim holy month.

"We have been eating one meal a day for months and we no longer even have the means to prepare it ourselves," he told AFP in a phone call.

"They serve it to us in a soup kitchen organised in a mosque."

Before the war erupted on April 15, towards the end of last year's Ramazan, Idriss ran a small food store.

But since the fighting

## Romanian President Iohannis to run for NATO leadership

**Monitoring Desk**  
BUCHAREST: Romanian President Klaus Iohannis said on Tuesday he has decided to run for NATO's leadership, a position for which many member states support outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

In February, the United States, Britain, France and Germany backed Rutte to succeed Jens Stoltenberg as the head of NATO, putting him in a strong position to win the leadership of the transatlantic alliance.

On Tuesday, however, Iohannis said he will compete for the post, arguing Eastern European states need better representation in Euro Atlantic leadership roles. "The time has come ... for our country to take on greater responsibility within euroatlantic leadership structures."



People wait for trains at a station in Shijiazhuang.



GAZA STRIP: 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**  
GAZA STRIP: 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

## 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 neared 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.

## Biden gov't 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.



Rescue personnel and local residents gather near a firecracker plant following an explosion.

## Indonesia to deport Japanese man accused of role in \$90 million investment fraud

**Monitoring Desk**  
BATAM: A Japanese man accused of helping to run a \$90 million investment scam will be sent home after four years on the run, Indonesian authorities said Tuesday.

Yusuke Yamazaki, 43, was arrested off Bulan island in Kepulauan Riau province on Jan. 31, while attempting to cross into Malaysia in a small wooden boat, said Nyoman Gede Surya Mataram, who heads the provincial office of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. He's expected to be deported by the end of the day.

The boat also carried

## Honduran ex-first lady seeks presidency after husband's conviction

**Monitoring Desk**  
TEGUCIGALPA: A former Honduran first lady said she will contest the 2025 presidential elections, an announcement that follows days after her husband's conviction for trafficking hundreds of tons of cocaine into the United States.

"I have decided to launch my pre-candidacy for the Presidency of the Republic for the National Party," Ana Garcia de Hernandez posted on social media platform X on Tuesday. The lawyer, whose husband Juan Orlando Hernandez served as president from 2014-2022.

## SpaceX mega rocket lost in final phase of 'successful' test flight

**Monitoring Desk**  
BROWNSVILLE: Starship, the world's most powerful rocket, flew further and faster than ever before during its third test flight on Thursday, although it was eventually lost as it re-entered the atmosphere over the Indian Ocean, SpaceX said.

Lift-off from the company's Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas came around 8:25am local time (1325 GMT) and was carried live on a website that was watched by millions on social media platform X.

## India's Pant says doctors considered leg amputation after car crash

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: Star Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant says that doctors raised the prospect of amputating his leg after the serious car crash that threatened to end his cricket career.

The 26-year-old is set to play for the Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League starting this month after a 14-month absence following the accident.

He is also in contention for the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States.

## 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

## 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.

## Republic Of Congo reports its first mpox virus cases, in several regions

**Monitoring Desk**  
BRAZZAVILLE: The Republic of Congo has reported its first cases of mpox in several regions, the health ministry said, an indication of how the disease may be spreading across Africa since sexual transmission was first confirmed on the continent last year.

Mpox is a virus that originates in wild animals and occasionally jumps to people, who can spread it to others. The virus was previously known as monkeypox, because it was first seen in research monkeys.

The World Health Organization said in November it had confirmed sexual transmission of mpox in neighboring Congo for the first time. African scientists warned this could make the disease difficult to contain.

The Republic of Congo's health ministry published its report on Wednesday. The report said some 43 cases had been reported to the ministry, including in nine out of the

## 'Katespiracy' explodes after UK royal photo gaffe

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The picture was meant to douse speculation about the whereabouts and health of Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, but instead her manipulated image unleashed a torrent of internet-breaking rumors and conspiracy theories.

The storm in the royal tea pot erupted after Kate, 42, on Monday apologized and admitted to editing a palace-issued photograph of herself with her three children after the altered image was withdrawn by news agencies including AFP.

The fiasco gave way to a fresh swirl of speculation about the British royal - dubbed online as "Katespiracy" - laying bare the fragility of the digital landscape in the age of rampant disinformation that has eroded trust and turned social media users into amateur sleuths.

The internet guessing game had already begun after the princess was not seen in public since attending a Christmas Day church service and underwent ab-

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

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, Development 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 formulated 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 reiterated 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.



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.

### Khawaja Asif chairs meeting on ministry of aviation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Defence, Defence Production and Aviation Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Thursday chaired a meeting and detailed briefing was given by the secretary aviation on role of aviation ministry, National Aviation Policy 2023, the challenges faced by Pakistan Aviation industry. The minister was also briefed on the entities working under the ministry including Pakistan Airlines corporation Ltd, Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority, Pakistan Airport Authority, Bureau of Air Safety Investigation, Air Port Security Forces and Pakistan meteorological department, said a press release.

While being briefed on PIACL, the minister remarked that the privatization of PIACL would be the priority of this government. He also commended the joint venture for mix use re-development of Roosevelt Hotel. Khawaja Asif showed his resolve to grow the aviation industry of Pakistan in terms of enhancing its contribution to country's GDP. International Finance Corporation (IFC) apprised the minister about latest development of outsourcing of three major airports including Islamabad International Airport, Jinnah International Airport Karachi and Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore in first phase.

### EU denies PTI contact regarding Pakistan's GSP plus status

ISLAMABAD (INP): The European Union Mission in Pakistan has refuted claims that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) contacted them regarding the country's GSP Plus status. Samar Saeed Akhtar, a spokesperson for the EU Mission, clarified their position, stating that they haven't received any official communication from PTI on the matter. This comes after a press conference by Pakistan's Federal Information Minister, Attaullah Tarar, where he accused PTI of attempting to get

Pakistan's GSP Plus status revoked by contacting the EU. He further claimed these actions were part of a "false campaign" to harm the economy. Responding to these accusations, PTI spokesperson Raouf Hassan categorically denied them, calling them "false allegations." He emphasized that PTI neither wrote nor intended to write any letter to the EU. Hassan further criticized the government, specifically veteran Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, blaming his "incompetence and stubbornness" for causing delays.



JAMAICA: Ambassador Masood Khan presenting Letter of Credence as Non-Resident High Commissioner to the Most Honorable Sir Patrick Linton Allen, Governor General of Jamaica.

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

KARACHI (APP): US Navy Ship USS INDIA-NAPOLIS, 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 plan-

ning 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. Pakistan Navy, in line with government policy, has always contributed significantly towards safety, security and freedom of navigation at high seas.



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

### Pakistan ranks 161st on UN's Human Development Index, as rich-poor nations' gap widens

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan was ranked at 161st position among 191 countries on UN's 2022/23 Human Development Index (HDI)'s annual rankings—three steps up from the 2021/22 ranking, according to a new UN Development Programme (UNDP) report. The HDI is a composite of statistics measuring such factors as per capita income, educational attainment and life expectancy.

The first UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) was prepared and launched in 1990 under the leadership of the late Dr. Mahbubul Haq, a former Pakistan finance minister. The latest report, 'Breaking the gridlock', revealed widening disparities between the haves and the have-nots, despite record high global human development scores in 2023. The 2023 HDI stands at a new high following steep decline during 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the report said. Rich countries experienced unprecedented development, the Human Development Report de-

tails, yet half of the world's poorest nations continue to languish below their pre-COVID crisis levels. India ranked at 132nd on the HDI index; Sri Lanka: 73rd; Bangladesh: 129th; Maldives: 90; Nepal: 143; Bhutan 127 and Afghanistan 180. Switzerland tops this year's rankings, followed by Norway and Iceland, while Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and Somalia lagged the furthest behind. "The widening human development gap revealed by the report shows that the two-decade trend of steadily reducing inequalities between wealthy and poor nations is now in reverse," said UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner.

In the last (2021/22) HDI ranking, Pakistan was placed at 164, amid global fall in development set off by the COVID-19 pandemic. magistrates conducted raids on airport road, Satellite Town, Nawab Kili, Bacha Khan Chowk, Kasi road, Sariab road and Kuchlak. It may be mentioned here that the Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hanza Shafiqat and Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Saad bin Asad had issued special directives to the price control teams to take stern action against the profiteers. The Commissioner said that different teams have been formed to take action against those involved in profiteering.



QUETTA: Newly elected Senator of PPP Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo in a group photo with PPP Provincial President Mir Chagez Jamali, MPAs Mir Ali Madad Jattak, Mir Asim Kurd Gailo, Mir Umar Bangulzai and others.

### Cancel arrest warrants Court ends proclaimed offender status of Hassan, Hussain Nawaz

ISLAMABAD (Online): Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad while ending proclaimed offender status of Hussain and Hassan Nawaz sons of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in three references of Avenfield, Alazazia and flag ship has cancelled their arrest warrants and approved their bail against surety bonds in the sum of Rs 50000. Hussain Nawaz and Hassan Nawaz who had absconded in these references appeared in the court Thursday and surrendered them before judge Nasir Javed Rana of the court. Judge Nasir Javed Rana said court has given relief to Hassan and Hussain Nawaz till today. They should surrender them before the court. On resumption of hearing Hassan and Hussain Nawaz appeared in the court along with their lawyer Qazi Misbah.

### AJK President calls for EU's role to help resolve Kashmir conflict

MIRPUR (APP): Azad Jammu Kashmir State President Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has said that the European Union can play an important role as a mediator between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. He expressed these views while talking to the Ambassador Dr Rina Kionka and Political Consul Rukiyeh Komurcu, who called on him at the Presidency in Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis on Thursday, the AJK President's office later said Thursday evening. Speaking on the occasion, the AJK president said that the long-running dispute posed a serious threat to peace and security in South Asia. Stressing the need for early settlement of the dispute, Barrister Chaudhry said that the Kashmir conflict could lead to a nuclear war between the two nuclear powers, Pakistan and India. "Any mishap, no matter how small or big, can be a precursor to a nuclear war."

### Pervez to contest by-polls; family signs nomination papers

GUJRAT (INP): Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Chaudhry Pervez Elahi has announced his participation in the upcoming by-elections, as confirmed by sources. Elahi's family members reportedly visited him in jail and formally endorsed his candidacy by signing the nomination papers for the by-election. The decision comes as the seat of PP 32 became vacant following the elevation of Chaudhry Salik Hussain, leader of the Muslim League (Q) and Federal Minister for Overseas, to the position of MNA. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has scheduled by-elections nationwide for April 21, encompassing vacant seats across the country.

### PUC spearheads nationwide observance of 'Intl Day to Combat Islamophobia' today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) is set to lead the charge in commemorating the International Day to Combat Islamophobia on Friday with a nationwide campaign in a bid to raise awareness and foster solidarity against discrimination targeting Muslims. This day, designated by the United Nations in 2022, is commemorated in 140 countries on March 15, worldwide, coinciding with the anniversary of the Christchurch mosque shootings, where 51 individuals lost their lives during Friday prayers. Talking to Arab media, PUC Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi underscored the alarming rise of Islamophobia as a global threat to Muslims. He urged world powers to accelerate their efforts in eradicating Islamophobia, emphasizing the urgent need for swift action.

Ashrafi stressed the collective responsibility of the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Co-operation, and other international entities to spearhead initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination. He emphasized the importance of fostering a culture of love, tolerance, and coexistence as fundamental pillars of a harmonious global society. Ashrafi underscored gravity of the situation and urgent need for concerted efforts at both the national and international levels to address the scourge of Islamophobia and uphold the principles of equality and mutual respect among diverse religious communities. Ashrafi said the day holds significant importance, particularly for the PUC, which has long been at the forefront of advocating for religious tolerance and understanding.



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

### Commander Bahrain National Guard calls on Air Chief

INDEPENDENT REPORT ISLAMABAD: Commander Bahrain National Guard, General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed 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 do-

mains were discussed, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The Air Chief stressed the deep-rooted brotherly relations between both nations. The Commander Bahrain National Guard also visited PAF Cyber Command where he was briefed about the operational capabilities of Pakistan Air Force. Expressing profound interest in the strides made by PAF in the Cyber domain, the visiting dignitary conveyed his intention to dispatch a specialized team to PAF to assess and address any existing gaps within the emerging technologies architecture of the Bahrain Armed Forces.

### PML-N clinches NA-81 after vote recount

GUJRANWALA (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), by a margin of 3197 votes. After the recounting, Azhar Qayyum secured 110,057 votes while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate Bilal Ajiaz bagged got 106,860 votes. It is pertinent to mention here that earlier Bilal Ajiaz was declared the winner with 117,717 votes while the PML-N candidate finished as runner-up with 109,926 votes. Aggrieved with the results,

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) by a margin of 3197 votes. After the recounting, Azhar Qayyum secured 110,057 votes while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate Bilal Ajiaz bagged got 106,860 votes. It is pertinent to mention here that earlier Bilal Ajiaz was declared the winner with 117,717 votes while the PML-N candidate finished as runner-up with 109,926 votes. Aggrieved with the results,



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

### EC issues election schedule for 48 vacant seats of Senate

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has issued election schedule of 48 seats of Senate. EC will start receiving nomination papers from today (March 15) Voting till take place on April 2. The nomination papers can be filed on March 15 and 16. The initial list of candidates will be put to display on March 17. The scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on March 19 and voting will take place on April 02.

As per election schedule the appeals against acceptance or rejection of nomination papers can be filed till March 21. Decision on appeal will be announced on March 25. The revised list of the candidates will be published on March 26. The nomination papers can be withdrawn till March 27. Polling for Senate seats will be held at 5 sites.



QUETTA: Former Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki, Mir Hiyarbiyar Domki and other greet newly elected Senator of PML-N Mir Dostain Domki.