

# Independent

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President, PM applauds security forces for foiling attack

## Security forces foil attack on Gwadar complex, kill 8 terrorists

Attackers killed while trying to gain entry into GPA complex, two soldiers embrace martyrdom

GWADAR (Agencies): The security forces on Wednesday repulsed an attack by militants on a complex outside the strategic port of Gwadar, killing all eight of them, officials said.

China has invested heavily in the mineral-rich southwestern province of Balochistan, including developing Gwadar, despite a decades-long separatist insurgency.

Armed with guns and bombs, the militants

stormed the Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) complex just outside the port that houses offices of government departments, intelligence agencies and paramilitary forces, said Saeed Ahmed Umrani, a government commissioner.

The militants detonated a number of bombs before launching a shooting attack and trying to storm the complex, he said.

In a post on social media platform X, Balochistan

Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti said eight militants were "neutralised by security forces", adding: "The message is loud & clear. Whosoever chooses to use violence will see no mercy from the state."

The military said in a statement issued later in the evening that a group of eight terrorists attempted to enter Port Authority Colony in Gwadar, which was successfully thwarted

Continued on page 2



GWADAR: View of site after unidentified gunmen opened fire at Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Complex in Gwadar.

## Cross-border terrorism will no longer be acceptable: PM

Says Pakistan wants to live peacefully with neighbouring states; Invites countries to come and work together to end terrorism; Says Pakistan has to get rid of debts as they are harmful; PM, cabinet to forgo salaries and perks; calls for Charter of Unity.

ISLAMABAD (INP/APP): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stated that Pakistan will not tolerate any more cross-border terror attacks on its soil.

Chairing the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad today, PM Shehbaz Sharif said security of the geographical frontiers of Pakistan is a redline.

Pakistan desires to have cordial relations with the neighboring fraternal countries to promote trade and economic relations. However, it is not acceptable that the land of the neighboring country is used for terrorism in Pakistan, he added.

Shehbaz Sharif proposed the formulation of a

joint strategy with the sincerity of purpose to defeat the scourge of terrorism. He said collective efforts against terrorism will help establish peace in the region and address other issues such as that of poverty.

Highlighting the sacrifices rendered by Pakistan in the war on terrorism, the premier reaffirmed the commitment to wipe out the menace of terrorism as was done previously.

Sharif vows to revive Pakistan's economy

Turning to the economic situation, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the country is compelled to secure another IMF package. He however affirmed the commitment to revive the economy and

help it stand on its own feet. We have made a conscious decision to minimize borrowing and gradually rid the country of loans.

The premier said an enabling environment will be created to attract investments across various sectors including agriculture, industries, Information Technology and mines and minerals.

He said the Special Investment Facilitation Council is serving as a robust platform to facilitate investment in the country.

APP adds: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing resolve to streamline the country's economy by bringing strict reforms in all

Continued on page 2

Would not make compromise on rights in "closed rooms":

## CM vows to speak to federation about rights in stronger manner through constitutional forums

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti welcomes former militant commander Sarfraz Bangulzai in national mainstream; emphasizes upon adopting course of sustainable development; says we have to increase our resources halting way of "commission" in projects

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has categorically stated that we would not be making any compromise on our rights in the "closed rooms" at all, rather would speak to the federation about the rights with federation in stronger manner through constitutional forums.

He said that if we can't give jobs to our youth, nor clean the city, then it is our fault, not of any "Punjabi".

The Chief Minister was expressing views at the "Balochistan Youth state Harmony Summit" organized at the Balochistan University of Information

Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIEMS) in collaboration with non-governmental organization, Voice of Balochistan here on Wednesday.

The Member of Provincial Assembly, Dr. Rubaba Buledi, former Commander of banned outfit joining national mainstream, Sarfraz Bangulzai, Vice Chancellor of BUIEMS, Professor Dr. Khalid Hafeez and others.

It may be mentioned here that Sarfraz Bangulzai participated in any public gathering after joining the national mainstream.

Continued on page 2



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

## Inquiry ordered into mine mishap: 12 coalmine labourers dead; 8 rescue alive in Harnai coalmine mishap

Independent Report

QUETTA: As many as 12 coalmine labourers died while eight others were rescued after a coalmine caved in following the gas explosion in Harnai coalmine field on late Tuesday night.

The Chief Mines Inspector Balochistan, Abdul Ghani told that some 12 coal mine workers were trapped in a coalmine located in Zard Aalo area of Harnai after the blast occurred there.

After the mishap, eight other local coal mine workers entered the coal mine to rescue the trapped miners. However, they were also trapped after the mine caved in.

Later, the rescue teams including Provincial Disaster Management Authority and Mines department reached the spot and started rescue operation.



During the course, eight coal mine workers, who had entered the affected mine for rescue, were rescued alive and shifted to the local health establishment.

However, 12 other mine workers could not survive and their bodies were taken out from the coal mine.

The deceased workers hailed from Pishin, Chaman, Harnai, Killa Saifullah and Quetta.

The Chief Mines Inspector informed that the affected coal mine has been sealed after completion of the rescue operation.

He said that an inquiry has also been ordered to probe into the coal mine mishap.

Meanwhile, bodies of deceased coal mine workers were sent to their native areas for burial.

## Donald Lu dismisses allegations of involvement in Imran Khan's removal

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu has categorically denied allegations suggesting the United States played any role in the removal of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan from the position of Prime Minister.

Lu's statement came during a hearing conducted by the US Congress Committee regarding the 2024 general elections in Pakistan, where he provided testimony on the matter.

Asserting respect for Pakistan's sovereignty, he emphasized that the allegations of US involvement in Imran Khan's removal were baseless.

Addressing concerns surrounding the safety of an American citizen, the Assistant Secretary of State underscored the seriousness with which the United States approaches threats against its citizens. He clar-

ified that any charges related to the cipher were unfounded and based on waivers.

Reflecting on Pakistan's history and the challenges it has faced, Lowe highlighted the nation's resilience, particularly in the context of the Afghan war's impact. He noted the significant participation of women and youth in the recent elections, despite instances of election rigging, violence, and threats.

Expressing concern over reported election abuses and violent incidents, the Assistant Secretary of State condemned attacks on media workers and restrictions imposed on internet and telecommunication during the electoral process. He reiterated the United States' commitment to upholding human rights standards and underscored the need for fair and transparent elections in Pakistan.

## ISI chief briefs President on security situation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lt-General Nadeem Anjum on Wednesday visited the Presidency and briefed President Asif Ali Zardari on a string of issues, sources said. President Asif Zardari welcomed the ISI chief at the Aiwan-i-Sadr after which they held a detailed meeting.

The meeting covers issues including internal security and situation at the borders.

## CM expresses satisfaction over foiling terrorists' attack at GPA Complex

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has expressed satisfaction over foiling the terrorists' attack in Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Complex in Gwadar and appreciated the security forces in this regard.

The Chief Minister said that the brave jaws of security forces foiled the attack of terrorism in Gwadar.

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti said that the brave forces eliminated eight terrorists by immediate retaliation. The Chief Minister paid rich tributes to the security forces on successful action. He made pledge to wipe out terrorism from the province.

## Quetta jolted by third earthquake in past 24 hours

QUETTA (INP): Quetta and adjoining areas were jolted by another earthquake in the wee hours of Wednesday, the third in the past 24 hours.

The intensity of third earthquake was recorded 5.6 magnitude on the Richter scale in Quetta city and other areas of Balochistan province adjacent to Afghan border. As per the National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC), the depth of the earthquake was 30 km and the epicenter of it was Shorawak area of Afghanistan's Kandahar province, adjacent to Nushki district of Balochistan that is 166 km southwest of Quetta.



QUETTA: Program Director Voice of Balochistan Hamna Malik presenting a shield to Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti after conclusion of Balochistan Youth Summit held at BUIEMS

## President for expanding scope of Pak-Japan cooperation

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday called for expanding the scope of bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Japan across a wide spectrum of areas, especially trade, investment, economy, culture and people-to-people contacts.

The president, talking to the Ambassador of Japan Mitsuhiro Wada, who called on him, said that Pakistan was a huge market and Japanese businesses should benefit from the economic opportunities by

investing in diverse sectors. He said that both countries had been enjoying long-standing relations, which needed to be further cemented for the mutual benefit of the two sides.

He highlighted that Japan had been a key development partner of Pakistan that had been supporting Pakistan's socio-economic development in different sectors under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

He further said that Pakistan had a huge popu-

Continued on page 2

## False narrative of Imran about Cipher distorted relations at int'l level: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataullah Tarar has said today's hearing at the US Congress about the Cipher has again proved that Cipher conspiracy of PTI was a lie and complete false.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad tonight, he said the false narrative of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founding chairman about Cipher distorted our relations at the international level.

The Minister said today's hearing also proved the PTI chairman as certi-

fied liar, who misled the entire nation and the youth by constantly speaking lies.

He said the false narrative of PTI founding chairman was also exposed in the Congress hearing, which was even arranged by the PTI after hiring lobbying firms in the United States.

Ataullah Tarar said PTI, under a well hatched conspiracy, put the interests of the state at the stake just to promote its political narrative and single person prioritized his personal interests over the state interests.

## President approves dismissal of Justice Mazahar Ali Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Dismissal of former Supreme Court judge Mazahar Ali Naqvi was approved by President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday.

The approval was given by the president after the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) found Justice Naqvi guilty of misconduct.

After withdrawal of the previous notification by the Ministry of Law accepting Naqvi's resignation as a judge, a new notification terminating his services was issued.

The latest notification cites Naqvi's judicial misconduct, as determined by the Supreme Judicial Council, as the reason for his dismissal.

## Two terrorists killed as many injured in N Waziristan operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two terrorists were killed and as many injured by the security forces during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted on the night of March 19th and 20th in North Waziristan District, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Wednesday.

During conduct of operation intense fire exchange took place between the Army troops and the terrorists.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area, the ISPR added.

"Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country," the ISPR said.



RIYADH: Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir exchanging views with Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, The Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during meeting held in Riyadh.

## COAS calls on Mohammad Bin Salman Saudi Crown Prince expresses desire to further strengthen bilateral ties with Pakistan

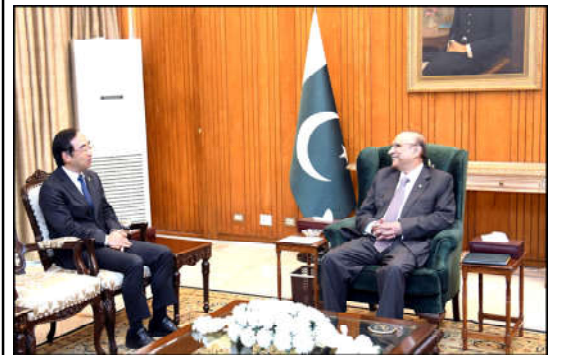
RAWALPINDI (Online): Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman has expressed desire to further strengthen bilateral relations with Pakistan.

He was talking to Chief of Army Staff General General Asim Munir who called on him during his official visit to the Kingdom.

Mohammad Bin Salman said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will always stand by Pakistan in future as well.

He highlighted KSA and Pakistan have historic brotherly and strong relations and both countries have always stood up for each other.

During the visit, the Army Chief also met with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Chief of General Staff Saudi Armed Forces General Fayyadh Bin Hamed Al Ruwaili, Saudi Assistant Minister of Defense Engineer Talal Abdullah Al Otaibi and other senior military leadership.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Mitsuhiro Wada calls on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Improving economy leads IMF to strike staff-level agreement with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reached a staff level agreement on the second and final review under Stand by arrangement.

This came during meetings between Pakistani authorities and the IMF team led by Nathan Porter in Islamabad.

Pakistan will receive 1.1 billion dollars after approval from the IMF's Executive Board.

In his statement following talks, Nathan Porter said Pakistan's eco-

nomical and financial position has improved in the months since the first review, with growth and confidence continuing to recover on the back of prudent policy management and the resumption of inflows from multilateral and bilateral partners.

Nathan Porter recognized the new government's commitment to continue the policy efforts that started under the current SBA to entrench economic and financial stability for the remainder of this year.



QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over a meeting of Zaireen Management Committee

## Pakistan urges UNSC to be more transparent, inclusive to address conflicts

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has called on the UN Security Council to "seriously consider" ways to implement its resolutions, especially on long-standing disputes, while stressing that the 15-member body must become more transparent, accountable, inclusive and democratic to respond to the growing challenges.

"Nothing undermines the credibility of the Council more than the 'selective' implementation and non-implementation of its resolutions," Ambassador Munir Akram told delegates when the long-running negotiations aimed at restructuring the Security Council resumed Tuesday.

"Failure to enforce its resolutions undermines the credibility of the Security Council and erodes confidence in its ability to fulfil the responsibilities assigned by the UN Charter," the Pakistani envoy said at a session devoted to the five interlinked 'clusters' of issues on reforming the Security Council, with a focused discussion on its working methods.

In his remarks, Ambassador Akram reiterated Pakistan's commitment to promoting enhanced transparency, accountability, and inclusivity within the Security Council's working methods, and called for collective efforts to achieve meaningful reforms.

Full-scale negotiations to reform the Security Council began in the General Assembly in February 2009 on five key clusters—the categories of membership, the question of veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Security Council, and working methods of the council and its relationship with the General Assembly.

Despite a general agreement on enlarging the Council, as part of the UN re-

form process, member states remain divided over the details.

The so-called Group of Four—India, Brazil, Germany and Japan—who seek for themselves permanent seats on the Council have shown no flexibility in their push for expanding the Council by 10 seats, with six additional permanent and four non-permanent members. On the other hand, the Italy/Pakistan-led Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group, which firmly opposes additional permanent members, has proposed a new category of members—not permanent members—with longer duration in terms and a possibility to get re-elected.

The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States—and 10 non-permanent members elected to serve for two years.

## Pakistani boxer Nisar Achakzai clinches Muay Thai C'ship title

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a thrilling display of skill and determination, Pakistani boxer Nisar Ahmed Achakzai emerged victorious at the World Muay Thai Championship 2024 held in Bangkok, Thailand. A native of Qila Abdullah district in Balochistan, Achakzai secured the coveted title for Pakistan, defeating Indian boxer Bajar Singh in the final round.

The final match witnessed Achakzai's dominance in the ring. He delivered a powerful knockout blow to Singh in the first round, clinching the championship title for his homeland.



QUETTA: Chairperson National Commission on the Rights of Child Aysha Raza Farooq meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti

## Supreme Court accepts bail pleas of five suspects in May 9 violence case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday accepted the bail applications of five suspects in a May 9 violence case.

The suspects had been taken into custody for attacking Hamza Camp in Rawalpindi and damaging it.

A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Jamal Mandokhel, granted bails to Saifullah, Awas Ayyaz, Kamran, Waqas and Nasrullah in lieu of surety bonds of Rs50,000 each.

During the hearing, the court admonished the police and the prosecution for faulty investigation.

Justice Mandokhel asked whether being a worker of a party or taking out a rally was a crime.

## President, PM extend greetings on Nowruz

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday extended their heartfelt greetings to all those who are celebrating the "ancient and cherished" tradition of Nowruz in Pakistan and around the world.

"I extend my heartfelt greetings to all celebrating the ancient and cherished tradition of Nowruz. May this joyous occasion bring renewed hope, prosperity, and unity to the comity of nations," the president said in a message.

He called for embracing the spirit of Nowruz and promoting the message of peace, compassion, unity and kindness.

In a separate message, Prime Minister Shehbaz said, "The day marks the arrival of spring and the renewal of nature. This is an occasion to show gratitude for our blessings and share our hopes and aspirations for the year ahead."

On the joyous occasion, he also thanked the communities those observe Nowruz in Pakistan including the Parsi community for their important contributions towards building a better Pakistan.

## CM commends CTD role in eliminating terrorists

Independent Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz reaffirmed the government's unwavering determination to eradicate terrorism entirely.

The CM emphasized the pivotal role of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in eliminating terrorists, underscoring its indelible contribution to the cause.

The CM presided over a meeting regarding the CTD here on Wednesday. Additional IG Waseem Ahmad Khan gave a briefing about the performance of CTD.

The CM said that a durable peace and stability is indispensable for the economic progress, adding that there cannot be any greater national service than safeguarding the life and property of the people. Extremism and murder being committed in the name of Islam is highly condemnable, she remarked.

Appreciating the performance of CTD, the CM stated the officers and sepoy of CTD are unknown heroes of the nation, adding that the credit for the establishment of an institution like CTD goes to Muhammad Shehbaz

Sharif. The officers and Jawans of CTD are rendering appreciable services, she said and added that the CTD officers and Jawans without caring for an acknowledgment and appreciation are performing their duties in a professional manner.

All possible resources would be provided to the institution which is striving to its utmost to maintain law and order, she asserted and maintained that the mission to ensure progress of Punjab, promotion of investment and tourism is not possible without durable law and order.

Earlier, Maryam Nawaz also visited the CTD Headquarter, met with the women officers and also had a group photo with them. She inaugurated the gymnasium and visited it as well.

Maryam Nawaz spent time with the children in the Day Care Centre and communicated with them.

Former Senator Pervaiz Rasheed, Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari, MPA, Sania Ashiq, Chief Secretary, IGP, Additional IG-CTD, Additional IG Operations and other officials were also present.



ISLAMABAD: Jordan's football players warm-up during a training session at the Jinnah Sports stadium in Islamabad, ahead of the FIFA World Cup Qualifying Round match against Pakistan.

## Cross-border terrorism will...

Continued from page 1

public departments, said the government will adopt zero tolerance policy against power thieves, tax evaders and corrupt elements.

He said the new government with fresh mandate will work diligently to enhance foreign direct investment, expand tax net, minimize tax evasion, reduce public debt, eliminate power theft and implement stern austerity measures in the government departments.

Addressing the first formal meeting of the federal cabinet held here chaired by him, the prime minister said, he had issued orders to completely digitize the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as soon as possible to avoid tax evasions.

In this regard, he said that a consultant was being hired for the purpose which would be appointed by next month.

PM Shehbaz regretted that trillions of rupees were being evaded by the mafias. Such mafias, he said run businesses worth billions of rupees but they pay zero tax due to undocumented transactions. With digitization of the FBR, such mafias would be exposed and apprehended, he said. He said Rs 2.4 trillion worth of tax cases were currently pending either in the tribunals or in the courts which needed to be concluded as early as possible. "I request the Chief Justice Supreme Court of Pakistan to help early conclusion of all such sub-judice cases."

Further, he said he had also directed to draw a list of honest and efficient officers to encourage them and acknowledge their services.

On the other hand, the prime minister vowed to take strict action against the officers involved in corrupt activities. He pointed out that in the previous government, the coalition government had saved the country when it was on the verge of default by putting its politics at stake.

Similarly, he said the annual power theft in the country was around Rs 500 billion which was alarmingly high and needed to be stopped immediately.

"I have categorically told the concerned authorities to present a comprehensive road map for complete elimination of the electricity theft and pilferage in the country," he said adding that in this way any kind of resistance will not be accepted.

"There will be zero tolerance...there will be no tolerance to this theft and pilferage."

As regards the government's programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the prime minister expressing satisfaction over conclusion of staff level agreement with the Fund for the final tranche of US\$1.1 billion, said that Pakistan needed another IMF programme to strengthen its economic foundation and to get rid of the debts. He said during his recent meetings with the diplomats of the friendly countries, he conveyed them that the government was eager to enhance bilateral relations with those countries in terms of trade and investment. He said under the umbrella of Special Investment Facilitation Center (SIFC), the government will provide one window option to the investors to enable them complete their

due process without any hassle. The prime minister said all the provinces should support the federal government to achieve its goals of bringing a halt to power theft and tax evasion.

Earlier, PM Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the armed forces personnel who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country's security. He said the terrorism in Pakistan had been completely eradicated from the country due to exemplary sacrifices of the armed forces personnel and the civilians. However, he regretted that few years ago, this menace of terrorism surfaced again in certain areas of the country.

"Almost 70,000 to 80,000 Pakistanis, including those from law enforcing agencies, police, professionals, and others sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country's security," he remarked.

He said a couple of days back, he visited the residences of Lt Colonel Syed Kashif Shaheed and Captain Ahmed Badar Shaheed and was impressed by the determination and courage showed by the bereaved family members. The PM also committed to stop infiltration of terrorists from across the border saying that it will not be born by the Pakistan government at any cost.

"We want to live with the neighboring countries in peaceful atmosphere and we also want to enhance trade and other bilateral relations with them. However, he said "we will not tolerate any kind of terrorism under no circumstances from across the border."

## Babar emerges as power-play powerhouse in PSL 2024

LAHORE (INP): Peshawar Zalmi skipper Babar Azam has taken his batting to a new level in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2024, establishing himself as a force to be reckoned with during the crucial powerplay overs.

The 29-year-old batsman has witnessed a significant rise in his powerplay strike rate compared to previous seasons. Prior to 2023, Azam's strike rate in the first six overs consistently dipped below 120.00, with the exception of 2019 (125.00). However, a focus on improved shot selection and consistent practice seems to have paid off.

Azam's expanded shot repertoire allows him to exploit gaps more effectively during the powerplay. This is evident in his recent innings against Islamabad United, where he showcased a sweep shot against spin and a powerful ramp shot against pacer Haneen Shah.

## CM vows to speak to...

Continued from page 1

There was debate on the state institutions and relations of youth.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister welcomed Sarfraz Bangulzai on joining the national mainstream.

He said that "the path on which you (Bangulzai) were in the past, was of the deviation" he assured that the government of Balochistan would extend every possible support to him.

At the same time, the Chief Minister also said that we would welcome to those come back after the path of deviation.

He said that there would be gap between the state and youth when the employments would be sold out for Rs. 1 million each.

He regretfully pointed out that the hatred is being created among youth of the province for last several years.

He said that the anti-state stories are told by everyone, but the facts are not expressed by anyone.

## Security forces foil attack on...

Continued from page 1

by the security forces personnel.

"Own troops employed for security responded immediately and effectively engaged the terrorists, and in ensuing fire exchange, all eight terrorists were sent to hell," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

A large quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the killed terrorists.

"However, during the intense exchange of fire, two brave soldiers; Sepoy Bahar Khan (age: 35 years, resident of District DG Khan) and Sepoy Imran Ali (age: 28 years, resident of District Khairpur) having fought gallantly, sacrificed their lives and embraced Shahadat," said the military's media wing.

"Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan, and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," it added.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the most prominent of several separatist groups in Balochistan, claimed responsibility for the assault in a statement, saying its militants attacked Pakistan intelligence agencies' offices. The BLA has previously been involved in attacks on Pakistani and Chinese interests in the region and elsewhere.

APP adds President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday strongly condemned a terrorist attack on Gwadar Port Authority Complex.

He also highly appre-

## President for expanding scope...

Continued from page 1

ciated the prompt response of the security forces and said that their valiant security forces manifested courage and will.

The president also vowed to counter terrorist elements with full force, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has extended heartfelt congratulations to the security forces for successful thwarting of the attack on the Gwadar Port Authority Complex.

In a statement, he said bravery and professional skills exhibited by the security forces in facing the attackers deserve high praise.

The Prime Minister expressed deep respect for the security forces personnel, who laid down their lives in the operation against terrorists. He said courageous sons of the nation, by sacrificing their lives in the fight against terrorists, are safeguarding the integrity of Pakistan.

Extending solidarity and condolences to the families of the martyrs, Shehbaz Sharif said the security forces' commendable bravery and timely action resulting in the failure of the attack and elimination of the attackers are laudable.

He said those targeting the peace of Gwadar, Balochistan, attempted to disrupt Pakistan's economic progress and inflict hardship on its people.

Shehbaz Sharif expressed the resolve that with the grace of Allah Almighty and the support of the nation, all internal and external conspiracies against Pakistan will be foiled.

## President for expanding scope...

Continued from page 1

peror of Japan.

He also fondly recalled his visit to Japan and meeting with the former Emperor of Japan Akihito.

He thanked the Japanese government for its support to Pakistan in the aftermath of the devastating floods in 2022.

Later, Ambassador of Yemen to Pakistan Mohammad Motahar Alashabi also called on President Asif Ali Zardari

and felicitated him on assuming his office.

During the meeting, the president said that Pakistan and Yemen enjoyed excellent bilateral relations based on shared bonds of religion, culture and values. Both sides emphasised the need for further increasing mutually beneficial cooperation.

President Zardari also thanked the Ambassador of Yemen for felicitations.



QUETTA: People are busy in buying food items before Iftar times as demands of food items increased in city during the Holy Month of Ramadan-Mubarak, in Quetta.

پرنسپل ڈیپارٹمنٹ گزٹل  
ڈپٹی کالج بروری روڈ کوئٹہ  
PRQ No 1685/20-03-2024  
www.dpr.gov.pk | @dpr\_gob | dpr\_gob | @dprbalochistan

پرنسپل ڈیپارٹمنٹ گزٹل  
ڈپٹی کالج بروری روڈ کوئٹہ  
PRQ No 1686/20-03-2024  
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Office of the Chief Engineer (O&M)  
Power 3-HHPS WAPDA Besham District Shangla KPK  
Bid No. ITR-28  
For procurement of operation seals and maintenance seals, leading rings along with quadrate rings & o-type rubber seal rings  
Invitation to Bids  
1. The Procuring Agency has reserved the funds for the procurement planned during the financial year 2023-24 & 2024-25. It is intended that part of the proceeds of the fund will be used to cover eligible payment under the contract Procurement of Operation Seals and Maintenance Seals, Leading Rings alongwith Quadrate Rings & O Type Rubber Seal Rings.  
2. The Resident Engineer (O&M), Khan Khwar Power Station Wapda Besham now invites sealed bids from eligible Suppliers of Procurement of Operation Seals and Maintenance Seals, Leading Rings along with Quadrate Rings & O Type Rubber Seal Rings.  
3. The bidding shall be conducted in line with the single stage one envelope procedure of the Public Procurement Rules 2004 and any Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority (from time to time), and is open to all potential bidders.  
4. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in an acceptable form in the amount of Rs. 2.5 million or freely convertible currencies in case of foreign Bidders.  
5. The original bid along with two copies, properly filled in, and enclosed in sealed envelope(s) must be delivered to the address Committee Room Olo Chief Engineer (O&M) Power 3-HHPS WAPDA Besham District Shangla KPK at or before 1100 hrs on 07.05.2024. The bids will be opened promptly thereafter in public and in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend in the opening at the Committee Room Olo Chief Engineer (O&M) Power 3-HHPS WAPDA Besham District Shangla KPK.  
Note: Local bidders/suppliers must be sale tax & provincial tax registered  
Chief Engineer (O&M) Power  
3-HHPS WAPDA Besham  
Ph: 0986400106, 0986400183  
Email: ceomhnp@yahoo.com | itre43@yahoo.com  
This notice is also available at PPRA Website: www.ppra.org.pk  
PID/LJ.No.20 Website: www.wapda.gov.pk PRD/LJ/WAPDA/345(2023-24)  
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## PM directs formulation of constitutional, legal amendments package for judicial reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the special committee concerned to formulate a package of constitutional and legal reforms to bring in judicial reforms in the country.

The prime minister, chairing the maiden meeting of the special committee on legal and judicial reforms, also instructed the committee to formulate a strategy to simplify the civil and criminal laws for ease of the common man.

The committee comprises Law Minister Azam

Nazeed Tarar, President of Supreme Court Bar Association Shehzad Shaukat, representative of Pakistan Bar Council Ahsan Bhoon, former Law Minister Zahid Hamid, senior legal expert Shahid Hamid and Attorney General Mansoor Awan, a PM Office press release said.

Expressing his desire to provide quick and easy justice to the common man, the prime minister called for easing the taxation matters for the people, particularly the business community.

He asked the commit-

tee to put forward its legal proposals to ensure effective recovery of taxes.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that pending tax recoveries worth Rs2400 billion due to the court or tribunals' orders was a matter of concern. He also sought an interim report within two weeks on the financial and tax matters.

He instructed that the report to be presented by the committee should be forwarded to the relevant ministries for implementation, after consultation with the coalition partners.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui chairs a meeting wherein he was briefed by officials of the Ministry of Federal Education regarding various programs and projects aimed at advancing education in Pakistan.

## Pirzada says: Lawyers rights to be protected at all costs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada has acknowledged the pivotal role played by the lawyers and reiterated the commitment to protect their rights at all costs.

Chairing a high level meeting regarding Park Road Housing Scheme, Islamabad, a project of Federal Government Employees Housing Authority and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), he assured that he was not only aware of the issues but also stand committed to ensure that pace of work is accelerated and the project is completed on time.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, President Supreme Court Bar

Association (SCBA) Shahzad Shaukat, Secretary SCBA1 Syed Ali Imran and Ahsan Bhoon also attended the meeting along with senior office holders of SCBA.

During the meeting, Director General FGEHA Capt. @ Muhammad Zafar Iqbal provided an update on the project's infrastructural development.

Both sides exchanged views regarding the progress of the project and also addressed pertinent matters and issues.

Azam Tarar and Ahsan Bhoon apprised the Housing Minister and Secretary Housing about the concerns and issues of lawyer's community and SCBA related to the project and demanded to speed up the pace of work.

## IRCRA to host annual Inter-faith Iftar on March 29

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Research Council for Religious Affairs (IRCRA) is set to host its annual Interfaith Iftar Dinner on Friday, March 29, at the prestigious Islamabad Club.

IRCRA President Muhammad Israr Madani, in an exclusive talk with APP, said this event would serve as a beacon of religious harmony, fostering dialogue and understanding among diverse communities.

He emphasized the significance of this event in promoting religious tolerance and bridging differences through dialogue. He reiterated that such initiatives are integral to creating an environment of mutual respect and understanding among people of different faiths.

## ICT's Ramzan Bazaars: Operation against price hike, 15 arrested, Rs 105,000 fine imposed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ICT administration has continued crack down against price hike in the Federal Capital with an aim to ensure fair access to daily essentials and maintain order in markets, including Ramzan Bazaars.

On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, all Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates, are leading these operations against the price hike and profiteer mafia.

In line with this initiative, inspections were conducted at 302 different locations including three Ramzan Bazaars which were set up by the district administration by Magistrates to curb the price hikes and arrested eleven accused while fines of Rs 94,000 were also imposed to the violators, said the ICT Spokesman, Dr Abdullah Tabassum.

During the drive, five kilograms of polythene bags were also seized by the officials.

## DG PSQCA vows to limit Trans Fat content in all foods for public health

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) with the support of Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA) convened a roundtable discussion aimed at tackling the health risks linked to the consumption of industrially produced trans fatty acids (iTFA) in Pakistan, where Director General of the Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), Ismat Gul Khattak reiterated the commitment to formulate 2% mandatory limit of iTFA across all foods to combat non-communicable diseases effectively.

The gathering addressed the urgent need for evidence-based mandatory policies to safeguard public health and mitigate the detrimental effects of excessive iTFA consumption, a news release said.

During the roundtable,

it was also discussed the imperative for Pakistan to adopt stringent mandatory limits of iTFAs in all food supplies to no more than 2% of total fats as recommended by WHO. Such a policy, if effectively implemented, holds the potential to save numerous lives and alleviate the strain on healthcare infrastructure.

National Coordinator, Nutrition and NFA, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Khawaja Masuood Ahmed emphasized the urgency of action. Key measures proposed included formulating a 2% iTFA limit in all foods and then banning partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs) to adopt the hybrid approach which best fit to Pakistan scenario. He also emphasized on fostering collaboration with the Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA).



## AIOU starts mailing of books

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has begun dispatching books to 60,000 students who are enrolled in the matriculation program for Semester Spring 2024.

According to Director Admissions AIOU, the process of dispatching books to matric program students will be completed by the end of this week.

Additionally, the process of delivering books to 80,000 students enrolled in FA will commence next week.

To ensure that all academic tasks are completed within the specified timeframe and to avoid any complaints from students, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has strictly instructed all departments to follow the academic calendar.

This is the first time in the university's history that semester admissions are underway, and the delivery process of books to students has already begun.

## World Water Day to be observed on March 22

ISLAMABAD (APP): Like other parts of the world, World Water Day will be celebrated on March 22 in Pakistan to raise awareness about the water crisis.

The theme for World Water Day 2024 is "Water for Peace," underscoring the pivotal role water plays in fostering stability and prosperity worldwide.

Since its inception in 1993, World Water Day has been observed on March 22, following the United Nations General Assembly's declaration.

On this day, the UN and its member nations dedicate efforts to implementing UN recommendations and advancing concrete activities to address global water challenges.

According to the United Nations, over 3 billion people worldwide rely on water sources that traverse national boundaries.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the legal reforms committee.

## Minister for declaring education emergency to enrol out of school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Wednesday underlined the need to declare national education emergency in the country to bring back out-of-school children.

He stated this while chairing a meeting held here.

Officials of the Ministry of Federal Education briefed the minister about different programs and projects, for advancing education in Pakistan. The participants of the meeting focused on the crucial initiatives to address the pressing issues within the education sector.

During the meeting, the minister expressed deep concern over the alarming number of out-of-school children in the country. In response to this challenge, he said that we will suggest

the prime minister and the federal cabinet to declare a national education emergency to enrol the out-of-school children without delay. This declaration aims to bring back these out-of-school children into the education system.

Furthermore, federal minister Dr Khalid Siddiqui directed the ministry to swiftly formulate a strategy, with the urgency of a wartime effort, to train one million technology and IT-skilled workers.

This initiative will be funded by the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), with the goal of equipping the workforce with all necessary skills.

In addition to addressing the educational needs of children, federal minister unveiled plans for a School Meals Program to be implemented in all Islamabad Government Primary



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi called on Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

## Speakers raise concerns over India's misuse of its judiciary to suppress voices in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a seminar held on the sidelines of the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), speakers hailing from various backgrounds expressed grave concerns over India's misuse of its judiciary to suppress political dissent in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The seminar hosted by the Community Human Rights and Advocacy Center, was addressed by noted international law experts including advocate Ahmer Bilal Sofi, Barrister Tanvir Altaf Hussain Wani Ronald Brones, while Muzammil Thakur moderated the panel, a press release said received from Geneva.

While shedding light on the denial of fair trials to Kashmiri prisoners, the panelists raised serious doubts about the impartiality of the Indian judiciary. Referring to Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR and Geneva Convention, the speakers said, "As per these international covenants, every prisoner is entitled to an impartial and public hearing when his or her rights are at stake."

## IHC orders Adiala jail authorities to arrange meeting of lawyers with PTI founder

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has order Adiala Jail authorities to arrange meeting of lawyers with PTI founder in the jail.

The petition was heard by Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir inquired from Additional Superintendent Jail (ASJ) why meeting is not being arranged. IHC has issued an order with the consent of Jail authorities. File appeal against this order and get it cancel. You will have to arrange the meeting till the order of two members bench is there. Implement court's order lest we should issue show cause notice.

## Special Traffic education and enforcement drive in full swing

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police took prompt action against underage motorcyclists and drivers and

City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police launched a special traffic education and enforcement campaign in order to solve the traffic related problems faced by the citizens on roads, a public relations officer said.

Following the directions of Islamabad Capital

## Ayaz, Mustafa express sorrow over tragic incident of mine collapse in Harnai

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah have expressed deep sorrow and grief over the tragic deaths of labourers as a result of mine collapse in Harnai, Balochistan.

They have expressed deep sorrow and grief to the families of the deceased labourers owing to the tragic incident of mine collapse, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

"The tragic incident of mine collapse is a severe reminder to adopt safety measures and ensure safety laws in the mine sector across Pakistan in order to avoid such untoward incidents."

## 19 outlaws held, narcotics, weapons recovered

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 19 outlaws including five professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered stolen motorbike, narcotics, weapons from their possession.

On the instruction of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminals in order to eliminate the crime from the city, a public relations officer said on Wednesday. As per the details, the Golra police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Faisal and Gul Rehman, recovered two 30 bore pistols from their possession.

## Salik Hussain says: Govt to introduce online land record service for Overseas Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain Wednesday said that the government will introduce online land record service for overseas Pakistanis to address their difficulties with regard to transfer of properties and attract foreign inflows. He said this while talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry headed by its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, said a press release.

The delegation also congratulated the Chaudhry Salik Hussain on assuming the charge of the Federal Minister. Chaudhry Salik said that the ministry has started work on the online

land record project with NADRA and other relevant institutions.

He elaborated that the services may be offered through the offices of community welfare attaches in foreign missions of Pakistan in countries with substantially large diaspora.

The minister also assured the delegation that business community will be given representation in different boards of the ministry to develop and promote business in the country. Speaking on the occasion, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that overseas Pakistanis are valuable asset of Pakistan and ambassadors of the country and urged to resolved their issues on priority basis.



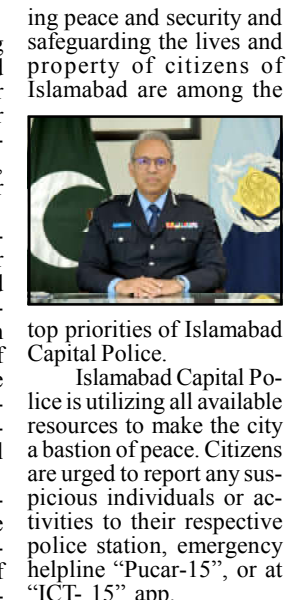
ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Yemen to Pakistan, Mohammad Motahar Alashabi, calls on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Security measures bolster for foreign nationals residing in Islamabad

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: According to details, the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan presided over an important security meeting, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the meeting was attended by senior police officers of Islamabad Capital Police. On the occasion a request has been made for the recruitment of 1000 personnel to ensure the safety of life and property of foreign nationals residing in the federal capital Islamabad.

Additionally, the Special Protection Unit will be restructured on modern parameters for the security of Chinese citizens. Maintaining peace and security and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens of Islamabad are among the



## CDA starts anti encroachment drive in federal capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Anti-encroachment operations are being conducted across the city on the instructions of the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) so that the land of Islamabad could be kept free from illegal constructions and encroachments.

These operations are being carried out by the Enforcement Directorate with the support of the district administration and Islamabad police.

According to the details, these operations were conducted on Islamabad Highway, Sector G-9, I-11, I-9 including Bari Imam, and Khanna Pull, where several encroachments and illegal constructions were demolished and the government land was retrieved.

The anti-encroachment operation was started from Islamabad Highway and Khanna Pull, where dozens of fruit stalls were removed and the road was cleared from both sides.



ISLAMABAD: A women taking packing cooked food for Iftar in Ramadan open kitchen organized by Muslim Hands Pakistan to provide high genic cooked meals to the most vulnerable communities.

## WPV1 detected in nine sewage samples

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan in 2021 and was reintroduced through cross-border transmission in January 2023. This virus has been detected in more than 150 sewage samples and five cases since 2023 in more than 20 districts.

The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH) has notified to the National Emergency Operations Center for Polio Eradication that WPV1 was found in two sewage samples.

These samples were taken from Quetta, two from Chaman, two from Peshawar and one each from Karachi South, Karachi Korangi and Mastung between February 21 and February 27, taking the number of total positive environmental samples in 2024 to 65. All positive environmental samples contain the YB3A virus cluster, which disappeared from

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## Austerity theatre

The government's recent unveiling of 'austerity' measures, ostensibly aimed at reducing expenses, appears to be more about show than actual substance.

While restricting cabinet members to three international trips per year and delineating travel class guidelines for various officials might seem like prudent steps, they barely scratch the surface of the belt-tightening needed to navigate Pakistan through its financial quagmire.

The decisions by the president and interior minister to forgo their salaries, though commendable on the surface, pale in comparison to the extravagance that continues to plague government spending. The gesture does little to address the underlying issues of fiscal irresponsibility that have led to our current economic predicament.

Allowing MNAs and senior bureaucrats the luxury of business class travel — which in practical terms for a return ticket to many European destinations means spending approximately a million rupees — is a slap in the face of the concept of fiscal restraint. The image of lawmakers and bureaucrats jet-setting on public coin sends a conflicting message to the populace they serve, especially when 40pc of the people fall below the poverty line.

The disparity in salary ratios between various employees in the UK and Pakistan serves as a shameful mirror for reflection. In the UK, the salary ratio between a janitor and the senior-most bureaucrat is 1:8, whereas in Pakistan, it is an astounding 1:80. The officials who think they are tightening their belts by not flying first class (the president and chief justice can, however) are sorely mistaken.

The austerity narrative pushed by the government — indeed like all other governments before it — collapses under the weight of these contradictions. The privileging of a select few to cushy travel perks, while a significant chunk of the nation struggles to eat three square meals a day, is not austerity; it is austerity theatre.

The critique here is not merely about the scale of the measures but their sincerity. Real austerity involves hard choices and genuine sacrifice, not selective tokenism. The continued allowance of benefits and the half-measures proposed signal a troubling lack of commitment to governance and fiscal responsibility.

If the government means business, lawmakers would do well to pass a resolution in parliament refusing such privileges until the economy stabilises. The PM, services chiefs, and at best, the foreign minister may utilise such travel perks but it is unreasonable to extend these to the rest of the government machinery.

Symbolic gestures won't do anymore. There is a need for a fundamental reassessment of priorities and spending, with a laser focus on eliminating waste and directing resources towards sustainable economic recovery. Only then can the nation hope to emerge from its economic plight and embark on a future marked by stability and prosperity.

Rafia Zakaria

The Israeli genocide in Gaza has stretched into Ramazan. The unspeakable horrors that have been visited upon the Palestinians have now led to the boundaries being blurred between fasting and famine; with many seeing no end to the hunger that ends at dusk for all other fasting Muslims. The equivalent of three nuclear bombs have been dropped on Gazans since last October. Over 31,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 70,000 injured — many left with no arms or no legs.

The US, as Zionist-fed American politicians have long been proud to proclaim, continues to stand by Israel. The promise was repeated like a nauseating chant in the first, second, third, fourth and fifth month of the war, even when hospitals were bombed, even when the International Court of Justice declared that Israel had to prevent a genocide, even when reel after reel from every corner of Gaza showed small children being maimed, shell-shocked, shivering, and left orphaned

and without food.

Then the electoral primaries for the American presidential elections began. If there is anything that the administration loves more than Israel and the dollars they reap from the Israeli lobbyists of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, it is to be in power. In this case, Joe Biden, the incumbent, does not have to battle a challenger in the primary elections. Technically, therefore the primaries should have meant little more to him than a perfunctory rite of passage. So it would have been, were it not for the war in Gaza and the unpredictable shift of a younger generation of American voters away from Israel.

This year the shift was seen in voting patterns. Rashida Tlaib the only Palestinian-American Congresswoman in the US House of Representatives, who represents Michigan state's 12<sup>th</sup> congressional district, including the city of Dearborn where the majority of residents are Arab American, signed onto the 'uncommitted' campaign.

The campaign, led by the advocates of a ceasefire

## Rift over Rafah

in Gaza, asked Democratic voters to deliberately vote 'uncommitted' in the Democratic primary to register their protest against American policies on Israel. When Michigan went to vote, 13 per cent of the state's Democratic primary voters voted 'uncommitted'. Even then, when Biden, who won the Democratic primary in Michigan, issued an official statement that evening, he did not mention either the uncommitted vote or the Palestinians.

If the Democrats running Biden's campaign paid little attention to the growing groundswell of anger towards the administration's support for Israel's genocide, the state primaries that followed have now forced them to focus. Even in a state like North Carolina, where there is no bastion of Muslim-Americans like in Michigan, 12pc voted uncommitted/ no preference in the Democratic primary as did 9pc in Massachusetts.

When it was the turn of Minnesota, where the constituency of Somali-American Congresswoman Ilhan

Omar lies, 19pc voted 'uncommitted'. The numbers have shown that the 'uncommitted' campaign had support beyond Muslim voters and among the young voters and progressives that the Biden administration desperately needs on its side if it is to beat Donald Trump in November. Add to this the African American voters who, polls show, see Gaza and Israeli discrimination as a civil rights issue and it would spell the end of the Democrats and of Biden.

Suddenly, it appears that Biden's tune towards Israel has changed. As these results and probably the Biden campaign's own polling results have shown, Muslims and Arab Americans along with younger voters were strongly opposed to the carte blanche that the Biden administration seemed to have handed Netanyahu and his camp of genocidal maniacs. These were warning shots — the lethal ones could come in November when all of the uncommitted stayed home and let the Trump camp sail to victory. Trump, for his part has expressed his support for Israel, but given the

isolationist tendencies of his supporters it remains to be seen if he would be entirely okay with slashing billions from the Israeli coffers without much ado.

Instantly, the US began to press Israel into a ceasefire prior to the beginning of Ramazan. When this did not happen, their displeasure was clear. When Israel said that it would pursue a ground invasion of Rafah, the border town where hundreds of thousands of desperate Palestinians are crammed together in terrible conditions, the US warned Israel that it was making a mistake.

The Netanyahu administration said it would pursue the campaign regardless, but this has led to an escalation of public annoyance from the American side. When Biden made his State of the Union address, he focused on the fact that aid had to get to Gaza (even though the solution he offered of an impractical fan-tastic "pier" for Gaza to "receive large ships carrying food, water, medicine and temporary shelters" is unworkable).

Then to show that the elected branches of the Democrats were together on this, Senate majority leader Democrat Chuck Schumer, the highest-ranking Jewish member of the US government, demanded new elections in Israel in his speech from the Senate floor. "The Netanyahu coalition no longer fits the needs of Israel after Oct 7," he said. While the US forces this on many countries, it was the first time their darling Israel received such instructions — and at a time while it is at war and has a national unity government.

So far, the Biden administration's 'anger' has been all talk. No policy has been changed and no arms shipments have been stalled or slashed. This, however, is exactly the complaint that the 'uncommitted' voters have against the Biden government. It may take more than talk to convince them to come out to vote in November, and Biden desperately needs them to do so.

In the meantime, the rhetoric against Israeli actions is as loud as it has ever been in the US and for now that may mean that those suffering in Rafah will not have bombs falling on them for some time. -- Courtesy Dawn

Yousuf Nazar

Pakistan needs more than a Charter of Economy. It needs a Charter of National Revival, based on a 4D strategy: Deregulate, Devolve, Deradicalize and Digitize.

Deradicalization is a prerequisite to having a modern and tolerant society open to doing business with the world. Deregulation is essential to harness the energies of a private sector severely constrained by bureaucratic hurdles and rent-seeking. Without the devolution of powers to local governments, it is impossible to provide basic services in a country with one of the fastest urbanization rates, and without digitalization, Pakistan cannot compete in a world driven by knowledge capital and increasingly defined by the digital divide. Pakistan's future will be defined by its success or failure to meet these challenges.

Can Pakistanis rise to the challenge posed by the current crises, or will they let the opportunity pass? This will depend on the policies of the ruling elites: will Pakistan will end up like Afghanistan, Iran, or North Korea or will it progress like

South Korea, Indonesia, or Malaysia? These nations rebuilt their countries from the ruins of the armed conflicts and civil wars that they experienced during and after the colonial era. Can Pakistan do that?

Politics is the art of the possible. What is possible is limited by one's imagination and capacity. Only the mediocre and timid would hide behind this argument and refuse to meet the challenges of their times.

According to the Financial Times, India's public digital infrastructure has become a core part of India's efforts to present it as a nascent economic superpower, alternative investment destination to China and leading voice of the global south. Supporters argue that "India has found a world-beating solution for building out and regulating the online commons that is more equitable than the US's laissez-faire approach, more innovative than the EU's regulation-heavy model and more transparent than China's totalitarian template."

India did not become a global economic power in a matter of a few years. It embarked on a reform process in 1991 and never

looked back. India is now the third largest digitised economy in the world. The astonishing growth in India's exports in the past five years is a case in point.

What about Pakistan? The comparison is not just about technology or exports. It is representative of the rapidly growing gap between the overall development in India and Pakistan. Two major reasons are the quality of governance (not necessarily democratic or autocratic) and the quality of education. Pakistan's quality of education is abysmal and it will require years to improve even if reforms had started yesterday.

We must move fast to meet the challenges. It is now do or die — change or perish. Over the past three decades, Pakistan's economic focus, particularly in its dealings with the IMF, has centred on addressing twin deficits — the current account and fiscal deficits. Despite concerted efforts, these issues have persisted and become worse. It is time for a fundamental and larger shift in our priorities and strategy as the IMF conditions alone are insufficient for achieving sustained growth and transformation.

Therefore, sustainable economic growth, driven by increased foreign direct investment (FDI), must become the linchpin of Pakistan's overall national agenda. FDI flows to developing countries amounted to \$841 billion in 2023, compared to just \$72.8 billion in loans committed by the World Bank and \$22.7 billion lent by the International Monetary Fund. China is a great friend but no solid economic growth is possible without foreign private investment and technology transfer from OECD countries and Western companies. Poor quality of education, lower level of female workforce participation, and pervasive extremism represent major obstacles to foreign investment in Pakistan.

Let's face it: investors don't feel comfortable visiting Pakistan. They see us as a politically unstable extremist country that is short of skilled human resources — an unattractive investment destination. How we can change that is the principal challenge, not just deficits. Pakistan has not developed its human resources. Pakistani women have one

of the lowest literacy levels in the developing world. According to the World Development Indicators, female adult (over 15 years of age) literacy rate in Pakistan is lower than that of even many African countries — it is lower than that of Ghana and Congo.

Saudi Arabia's crown prince almost banished the role of religious scholars from public policy, disbanded its once-feared morality and recently relaxed restrictions on the sale of alcohol. In 2020, the UAE decriminalized alcohol and lifted the ban on unmarried couples living together. Dubai was ranked number one among cities with the highest spending by international tourists, earning \$29.4 billion in 2022 — way ahead of London, where tourists spent \$16.1 billion.

These examples underscore the importance of modernization as part of the overall economic development. Only through comprehensive realignment of all policies towards the goal of attracting more foreign private capital can Pakistan navigate its way out of the vicious cycle of debt, low growth, inflation, and poverty. The root causes

of Pakistan's low investment and savings rates are deeply entrenched in structural issues, requiring significant political, economic, and social reforms on the one hand and making Pakistan an open and friendly country for Western private investors on the other.

Pakistan cannot and must not rely on just government-to-government aid, usually in the form of loans. The cautionary tale of Ethiopia's state-led growth model serves as a reminder that unsustainable borrowing for large-scale projects can exacerbate economic vulnerabilities. China accounted for nearly 50 per cent of Ethiopia's \$28 billion external debt in 2023. Last December, Ethiopia became the third African country to formally default on its debt. Rather, Pakistan must chart its course tailored to its unique circumstances, mobilizing international support — particularly that of foreign private investors — vigorously to realize its economic potential by following the 4D strategy: Deregulate, Devolve, Deradicalize and Digitize. -- Courtesy TheNews

## Charter of national revival

### Russian roulette

Mahir Ali

A thumping majority for Vladimir Putin in his fifth bid for the Russian presidency was a foregone conclusion, even though its size surprised even seasoned analysts. It's a 10 per cent improvement on his 77.5pc score in 2018, and his initial candidacy in 2000 was rewarded with little more than 53pc of the popular vote.

The electoral exercise that began last Friday and concluded on Sunday was not billed as a wartime affair, given that the aggression against Ukraine has officially been designated as a special military operation. But a war by any other name smells just as foul, and there is little evidence that most Russians buy the Kremlin's narrative that this sordid conflict bears any resemblance to the 'great patriotic war' of 1941-45, in which the Soviet Red Army ultimately routed the Nazis.

Russian accounts frequently neglect to mention that Josef Stalin panicked when Adolf Hitler betrayed the Nazi-Soviet pact, having ignored reports of an imminent German invasion from his spies. Or that Soviet military strategy went awry until Stalin left it to the generals. After the war, the domestic politics of paranoia resurfaced. In the first phase during the 1930s, Stalin had physically eliminated all conceivable rivals as well as numerous competent military leaders, which facilitated the initial Nazi cakewalk through vast tracts of Soviet territory.

Putin's Stalin-esque paranoia has been evident since his earliest days at the helm. Many perceived opponents — from recalcitrant oligarchs and disenchanted intelligence agents to journalists and politicians — died in mysterious circumstances, as did political rival Alexei

Navalny in a Siberian prison colony recently.

I find it hard to share Western and Russian liberals' enthusiasm for Navalny as an antidote to the poison Putin has injected into the lifeblood of Russia, notwithstanding his worthy anti-corruption crusade. But he certainly deserved the opportunity to face Putin on a level electoral playing field. He wouldn't have won, but the impression of an autocrat backed by more than 87pc of Russians might have been averted.

Of course, an imprisoned Navalny would not have been permitted to contest, so his elimination can perhaps only be explained by visceral hatred, or as a means of limiting the challenge to any of Putin's successors.

The irony of Russia's recent history is that the federation's least democratic election occurred during the last months of the Soviet era, in March 1991. Boris Yeltsin won it with more than 58pc of the popular vote, despite the antipathy of the Gorbachev government. Yeltsin went on to play a key role in reversing the absurd August coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. Emboldened by Western backing, he went on to dismantle the USSR in collaboration with the elected leaders of Ukraine and Belarus, ignoring the non-Slav components of the union and superseding a new union treaty that Gorbachev was on the verge of finalising.

We will never know how long a reformed Soviet Union, composed of sovereign states that finally enjoyed the autonomy from Moscow that Vladimir Lenin had argued for 70 years earlier, might have lasted. The Yeltsin regime destroyed a moribund economy desperate for renewal but replaced it with predatory capitalism. He also de-

ploped the army against parliament, and incarcerated politicians included his vice president, Aleksandr Rutskoi (a former war prisoner in Pakistan during the Afghan conflict).

The 1996 election went to a second round, and Yeltsin beat the fairly dismal Com-munist Party candidate, Gen-nady Zyu-ga-nov, with the aid of authorised foreign interference — primarily from Am-e-rica. The services of the new-fangled intelligence agency, the FSB, may also have been invoked. Its first director was a former KGB agent and deputy mayor of St Petersburg, who was named prime minister in 1999. Shortly afterwards, Yeltsin quit, having been offered immunity from prosecution for corruption, and named Putin as acting president. The rest is recent history.

Stalinism could not even begin to be exercised until the dictator's demise in March 1953, after 30 years in power, and it is widely assumed that Putin's exit from the Kremlin will also involve a coffin. That could be a long time coming, and it would be inhumane to prolong the Ukraine war indefinitely. In that context, Pope Francis' much-pilloried advice on pursuing peace makes far more sense than the gung-ho blather from Nato's Jens Stoltenberg or the EU's Ursula von der Leyen.

Besides, let's not forget that popular support for Putin is only reinforced by Western Russophobia that cancels Chekhov and Tchaikovsky, and queries Russian cultural and sports figures about their views on the Ukraine war. What are the chances that the Israeli or Jewish participants in any event might be asked whether they support the genocide in Gaza? -- Courtesy Dawn

### Climate Commerce: Exploring Opportunities for Sustainable Economic Development

By Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

The intertwining dynamics of trade and climate change have emerged as a pivotal nexus in the global discourse, where economic imperatives and environmental challenges converge. Traditionally viewed as disparate domains, trade and climate change are increasingly recognized as interconnected spheres that not only influence each other but also offer opportunities for mutual reinforcement.

Trade, the engine of globalization, has undeniably transformed the global economy, fostering economic growth, technological advancements, and poverty alleviation. However, these benefits have often come at the expense of environmental degradation, with increased production, transportation, and consumption contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and resource depletion.

Conversely, climate change poses one of the most pressing challenges of our time, threatening ecosystems, livelihoods, and global stability. Rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and sea-level rise exacerbate vulnerabilities and deepen inequalities, necessi-

tating urgent action to mitigate emissions and adapt to a changing climate.

Within this complex landscape, the interaction between trade and climate change presents both challenges and opportunities. While trade can exacerbate climate change through carbon-intensive processes and long-distance transportation, it also serves as a catalyst for climate action by facilitating the diffusion of clean technologies and incentivizing sustainable practices.

Key mechanisms through which trade can contribute to climate change mitigation include the dissemination of clean technologies and the incentivization of environmental stewardship through market mechanisms such as eco-labeling and carbon pricing. Moreover, trade promotes international cooperation on climate issues through multilateral agreements and facilitates the scaling up of climate finance by mobilizing private investment.

However, realizing the full potential of the trade-climate nexus requires addressing inherent challenges and trade-offs. Trade liberalization can lead to increased emissions through the

expansion of energy-intensive industries, highlighting the need for environmental safeguards in trade agreements. Furthermore, equitable distribution of trade benefits is essential to ensure that vulnerable populations, particularly in developing countries, are not marginalized.

In navigating this complex landscape, policymakers must prioritize inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and capacity building while promoting sustainable trade practices. By harnessing the synergies between trade and climate action, policymakers can chart a course towards a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

The intersection of trade and climate change offers a nuanced and multifaceted arena that demands strategic policy interventions and collaborative efforts. With careful navigation and commitment to sustainable development, the trade-climate nexus can be transformed into a driver of positive change, paving the way towards a more prosperous and environmentally sustainable world.

The writer is Researcher at National Assembly of Pakistan

## Sindh cabinet approves Rs 521m for bus service, decides to launch Kissan card

KARACHI (APP): Sindh cabinet on Wednesday approved Rs 521 million for fuel indexation of Intra-District Bus Service and Rs.5.027 million grant JS Academy for the Deaf and decided to launch Kissan Card to support peasants.

Chairman Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has given clear instructions for the issuance of Kissan cards and preparing a plan to carry out development initiatives in every district. "I want to constitute a committee to implement the Election Manifesto of the party so that all the 10 points as announced by the chairman can be implemented in true letter and spirit," he said.

The cabinet meeting was held at CM House and was chaired by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. All provincial

ministers including Sharjeel Memon, Dr Azra Pechuho, Nasir Shah, Sardar Shah, Zulfiqar Shah, Jam Khan Shoro, Ali Hassan Zardari, Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, advisors Babl Khan Bhayo, Ahsan mazzari, Najmi Alam - Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Principal Secretary CM Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Shakil Manejo, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoi and other concerned officers.

Senior Minister for Information Sharjeel Memon briefing the cabinet said that the project to supply, operate and maintenance for the Sindh Intra-District People's Bus Service was awarded to National Radio Transit Authority (NRDC) in October 2021 for a term of 12 years - up to Oct 2033.

The NRDC supplied 250 buses of them 230 are

operational and an additional 40 buses have also been added to the fleet, apart from bringing the remaining 30 buses of the initial lot of 250.

Sharjeel told the cabinet that the project was a G2G initiative between the Sindh government and NRDC. He added that it was the first ever Intra City Public Transport Project operating in Mixed Traffic, particularly in Karachi and other cities of the province such as Larkana, Hyderabad and Sukkur. He said that the Transport department was responsible for the provision of Depots, Routes, Land spaces for Bus Stations free of all encumbrances, provision of utilities at depots and Bus Stations, and payment of busses including taxes and duties.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a Cabinet meeting held at CM House in Karachi.

## CM witnesses MoU signing ceremony for providing 20,000 bikes to students

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif witnessed the signing of memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Transport Department and Bank of Punjab for provision of 20,000 bikes to students on easy installments, here on Wednesday.

Secretary Transport Ahmed Javed Qazi and President Bank of Punjab Zafar Masood signed the MoU.

Terming the step a revolutionary initiative for students, the CM said that these bikes would be provided to students under the Chief Minister's Youth Initiative scheme. She said 19,000 petrol and 1,000

electric bikes would be given to students free of interest in monthly installments, adding that the monthly installment of petrol bike would be Rs 5000, whereas it would be less than Rs 10,000 for the e-bike.

The CM said the Punjab government would bear interest on providing bikes to students on easy installments in collaboration with the Bank of Punjab, adding that the provision of bikes to students would revolutionise their lives. Personal ride would ensure ease of travel and saving of time in their daily lives, which would lead to improvement in their academic performance, she

asserted. The chief minister noted that equal representation of male and female students in the distribution of bikes is welcome.

The CM also inspected the proposed electric and petrol bikes for students. She asked about the price of the bikes and checked their quality, and directed to match color of bikes with the color of Punjab government's green logo. Registration of students for bikes would start as soon as possible, she informed and maintained that after the draw in May, delivery of bikes would start in the same month.

Senior Minister Marriyung Aurangzeb.

## Minister directs completion of centralized database software in 25 districts

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Excise, Mian Khaleeq-ur-Rehman has directed to complete centralized database software in 25 districts of the province.

He was chairing a meeting regarding Motor Vehicle Software Database and Software Up gradation here on Wednesday.

The minister said that transparent system of taxation was being introduced in the province while digitization has been

brought in excise an taxation system for facilitation of people.

He also directed steps to resolve technical problems in Motor Vehicle Software Database and its implementation all over the province. He directed to complete database in 25 districts of the province and added that integrated system would soon be developed for online verification of property and motorcar taxation.

Excise minister said that citizen service.

## Air Vice Marshal Khalid Mahmood calls on Sindh CM

KARACHI (APP): Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Southern Command Air Vice Marshal Khalid Mahmood called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House on Wednesday.

According to the CM House spokesman, matters related to professional capabilities were discussed in the meeting.

The Air Officer Commanding also felicitated Syed Murad Ali Shah on assuming office as the Chief Minister Sindh.



LAHORE: Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazir presiding over an important at PMU.

## Salman advocates self-accountability, reform in health sector

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has emphasised establishing a culture of self-accountability across all institutions, including the Health Department.

Chairing a meeting on Wednesday, he highlighted the importance of clean character and vowed severe punishment for those involved in stealing medicines from hospitals.

During the meeting held at the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education, Salman Rafique expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve the health department once again, emphasising government's commitment to serving people. He noted the upcoming construction of a state-of-the-art cancer hospital in Lahore and pledged to improve emergency services.

Echoing minister's sentiments, Punjab Health Secretary Ali Jan Khan outlined plans to implement the standard operating procedures (SOPs) at the government hospitals in line with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision. He stressed the need for reforms to enhance the health system, affirming a zero-tolerance policy for medicine theft in government hospitals.

Earlier, Khawaja Salman Rafique reviewed the conditions of government hospitals in detail during the meeting. Secretary Health Ali Jan Khan and other officers gave a briefing in this regard.

Special secretaries Syed Wajid Ali Shah and Raja Mansoor Ahmed, additional secretaries Zahida Azhar, Agha Nabeel and Dr. Hafiz Shahid Latif.

## ANF recovers 30 kg drugs in six operations

**Independent Report**  
RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 30 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from a parcel booked for Lahore in TCS office Rawalpindi. 1,943 intoxicating tablets were recovered from a parcel sent from Thailand at a courier office in Rawalpindi. 85 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport.

13 kg heroin, 9 kg hashish, and 980 grams Ice were recovered from the possession of two accused arrested from Makran Coastal Highway Hub.

## SHO suspended for faulty inquiry of minor's killing

**Independent Report**  
MUZAFFARGARH (APP): The Station House Officer (SHO) was suspended for conducting a faulty investigation of a minor's killing which failed to determine the cause of death. The police source on Wednesday said that SHO Thana City Chowk Sarwar Shaheed, Kamran Saif, was suspended whereas the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) has further marked inquiry of the child's death to Kot Addu Police Station.

It's important to note that a 12-year-old student of a local seminary named Muhammad Saeem was killed due to the explosion of a firecracker in his hand.

## KP gov't committed to underprivileged children's uplift: CM

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur has said that the government is committed to uplifting the lives of underprivileged children.

He expressed these views during his visit to the state children institution- ZamungKor campus here.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said it was the government's responsibility to ensure the well-being and development of children, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

As part of efforts, he said that the government would fulfill its responsibilities by providing the children of ZamungKor with the best education, food and other

necessary facilities. An Iftar Dinner was also arranged for children and staff of the campus where the chief minister interacted and distributed cash prizes among the children.

He also visited various sections of the ZamungKor and lauded staff's services and their profound commitment to ensuring a brighter future for the children of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He also assured his all out support of his government for fulfilling requirements and needs of the children.

Assistant Director of the campus, Rafiullah Khan expressed gratitude for the Chief Minister's visit and pledged to continue working closely with the government to meet the essential needs of the children.

## Ramazan Ration bags LHC rejects plea seeking immediate removal of Nawaz Sharif picture

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has rejected the plea seeking immediate removal of Nawaz Sharif picture from Ramazan ration bags.

Justice Shahid Karim of LHC took up the petition for hearing Wednesday.

Counsel Salma Riaz gave arguments on behalf of the petitioner.

The counsel took the plea national exchequer cannot be used for personal publicity. This way the distribution of atta is against the dignity of the citizens.

The petitioner

prayed the court to order for stopping the printing of PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif picture on ration bag. Order be issued for not hurting the prestige of the citizens in connection with distribution of atta.

Punjab government be ordered to send the cash to the citizens at their homes through Benazir Income Support.

The court rejected the plea for removing Nawaz Sharif picture from ration bags related to Ramazan package forthwith.

The court while issuing notice to Punjab government sought reply.

## PHC bars ECP from proceeding against KP CM in disqualification case

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Wednesday barred the Election Commission from proceeding against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in the disqualification case.

The EC had summoned KP CM on March 26 on a complaint of his disqualification due to non-disclosure of assets and Ali Amin had moved PHC against the EC's notice.

Justice Ejaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmed of Peshawar High Court heard the petition of Ali Amin Gandapur.

The counsels of Ali Amin, Sikandar Shah Advocate and Alam Khan

Adanzai Advocate told the court that the EC had no authority to take action now as Gandapur had also taken oath as elected representative.

They argued there was an opportunity to object at the time of nomination papers, but no objection was raised at that time.

Justice Ejaz Anwar remarked that nothing had happened yet rather a notice was served.

Justice Ijaz Anwar remarked that now the decision of the Supreme Court has also given a verdict that no institution has the authority to declare anyone as "Sadiq" and "Amin", to which the lawyers replied that the decision of the apex court also supports Ali Amin.



MUZAFFARABAD: Women from far-flung rural areas queue up outside the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) office to receive money in the warm, sunny month of Ramadan, waiting for their turn.

## Ministers, former NA Speaker inspect health projects in Swabi

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Minister for Irrigation Aaqibullah, and former Speaker of the National Assembly Asad Qaiser on Wednesday visited Swabi to inspect ongoing health infrastructure projects.

Accompanied by Special Secretary Health Habibullah, Chief Planning Officer Qaiser Alam, DG Health Dr. Shaukat Ali, Director Public Health Dr. Arshad Roghani, and other officials, the ministers visited the under-construction building of Women and Children Hospital in Swabi.

During the briefing, Director General Health Services Dr. Shaukat Ali informed that the project would incur a cost of 3.8 billion rupees, with 236 million rupees allocated for the current financial year.

The hospital, comprising 260 beds, is being constructed on a 46 kanal land allocated for it. 55% of the construction work has been completed and with funds available, the hospital is expected to be fully operational by June 2025. Additionally, Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Irrigation Minister Aaqibullah, and former Speaker of the National Assembly also visited the District Headquarters Hospital in Swabi. They were welcomed by MS Noor Alam, who briefed them about the ongoing construction of a new hospital building to replace the dilapidated one. The only pending task in the DHQ is the installation of elevators, which the ministers directed to be completed promptly.

During the visit, the ministers inspected various departments.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz inspecting proposed electric and petrol bikes for 20,000 Bike Project for students.

## Punjab Police sign MoU for higher technical education of children of martyrs, employees

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has taken another good measure for the higher technical education of children of martyrs and employees of Punjab Police.

An MoU was signed between the Punjab Police and a private college (Shamim Ramzan College of Health Sciences). Under which the children of police employees will get better opportunities for higher education. According to the details, IG Punjab and CEO College Shahid Rasool signed the MoU at the ceremony held at the Central Police Office here on Wednesday. Under the MOU, children of police

martyrs will be given specialized degrees/courses in pharmacy technician, dispenser, medical lab technology, operation theater technology and radiology & imaging technology absolutely free, whereas children of in-service employees are given 50% discount in all course fees. Police employees will avail these educational scholarships in five colleges located in Vehari, Okara, Jhang, Arifwala and Shorkot. The IG Punjab thanked the private college for its support in skills-based degree programs and courses. He said that with this initiative, the children of police employees will be able to get respectable employment by obtaining degrees.



GILGIT: Minister Agriculture Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Anwar speaks during the 3rd sitting of 18th Session of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly under the chair of Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad Advocate.

## Commissioner Mardan for ensuring safety to people lives, property

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has directed the concerned authorities to strengthen the security arrangements at all levels in the context of the current security situation and to ensure the safety of people's lives and property at any cost.

He was addressing the Divisional Intelligence

Coordination meeting at his office. Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar, Regional Police Officer Najibur Rahman Bagwi, Deputy Commissioner Swabi Dr. Tariqullah, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Saeddullah Jan, ADCs Shah Zaib and Gohar Ali, officers of security agencies, ANF and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

## Provincial Ombudsman resolves 38 complaints

LAHORE (APP): On the orders of Provincial Ombudsman Punjab Major (ret'd) Azam Suleman Khan, various provincial departments, secretary Punjab Workers Welfare Fund Lahore, administrative Officer Provincial Welfare Fund Board Punjab, Punjab Government Servants Benevolent Fund Board Lahore, secretary Workers Welfare Board Labour and Human Resources Department paid marriage

grant, death grant, farewell grant of Rs 72 lakh to 36 applicants. Also, due to efforts of Ombudsman Punjab, Additional Director Grievance Redress Cell, Punjab Social Protection Lahore, District Monitoring Officer Education and Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme Lahore paid educational scholarships worth more than Rs 16 lakh to 38 students, who received educational scholarships.

## Chief Minister orders revision of stray dog policy

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, taking notice of the inhumane killing of stray dogs, has directed concerned authorities to review the current policy on their extermination.

He instructed the Municipal and Livestock Departments to develop an alternative policy.

A communication from the Chief Minister's Secretariat to the relevant departments highlights the ineffectiveness and cruelty of the current approach.

The directive emphasizes the need for collaboration among departments to devise and implement a humane alternative promptly. The new policy will focus on TNVR principles (Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Return).

The concerned departments are mandated to provide daily progress reports to the Chief Minister's Secretariat for monitoring and evaluation.

## 15 dead, 1152 injured in Punjab road accidents

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: At least fifteen people were killed and 1152 injured in 1085 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of whom, 542 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 610 victims with minor injuries were treated on the spot by Rescue medical teams.

Analysis showed that 603 drivers, 33 underage drivers, 174 pedestrians, and 390 passengers were among the victims of road crashes. Statistics show that 256 road accidents were reported in Lahore due to which 281 people were affected placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by Gujranwala 74.



LARKANA: A large number of people breaking fast (Iftar) in the holy month of Ramzan ul Mubarak at a local Masjid.

## PM for including global experts in economic reforms consultation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday decided to include global experts and all stakeholders in the consultation process aimed at improving the economic health and financial stability of the country. The prime minister would oversee the implementation of the economic reforms. The prime minister chaired a meeting on economic revival and

reforms, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During the meeting, the prime minister said that strengthening of economy was among the top priority of his government. The prime minister said that the government would provide all facilities to the export industries and increase global market outreach of the country's exports. He further said that they would increase the tax

net instead increasing taxes, besides supporting small, medium and large industries in the country. He also asked for submission of reports over economic reforms in different sectors in phases, besides directing to give vital significant to value addition exports in the country's export policy. He vowed to bring country's exports into international value addition chain. The expertise of the international experts with



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Economic Revival and Reforms.



ISLAMABAD: EU Ambassador Riina Kionka calls on Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and congratulates him for assuming the portfolio of Ministry of Commerce.

## CPEC pivotal for development in Balochistan: PCJCCI

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Wednesday that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would bring enormous opportunities to Balochistan and ensure modern development there. Speaking in a think-tank session here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added that the regional countries, especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, would use the corridor for exports and trade through Gwadar port.

PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong said that the minerals and fishery sectors of Balochistan have immense potential and the federal government is taking serious steps to utilise it for the benefit of the people of Pakistan. He emphasised that Gwadar port and various projects under CPEC will change a lot for the people of Balochistan and the Government of Pakistan is especially focusing on road infrastructure, development of industrial and agriculture sector, provision of employment,

and availability of basic facilities in Balochistan. He added that there is a dire need to include transport, construction of basic infrastructure, provision of clean drinking water and its better utilization, agriculture and livestock, information technology, energy, industry and commerce, manpower and education and other schemes for the revolutionary development in such neglected province of Pakistan. While the joint Chamber's Vice President Hamza Khalid said that the new government.

## Chicken, eggs prices reach at Rs 420 per kg, Rs 280 per dozen

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of poultry chicken reached Rs 420 per kg and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 280 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 700 to 710 per kg in the open market, according to the survey conducted by APP here on Wednesday. The price of poultry chickens and eggs has been going above Rs 420 to 280 per kg and dozen for the past last months, which is getting away from the purchasing power of consumers day by day. The prices of poultry

items have increased by 20 percent in the twin cities during the last month after Ramazan began, which has created huge volatility in the market. According to the market survey, during the last two months in the twin cities, a 24% increase was witnessed in the price of poultry chicken, while as same as 30 per cent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the same period. Meanwhile, talking to APP, former Chairman of Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Dr Sajjad Arshad said that the increase in the current prices of poultry was due to demand and supply factor.

## Tractor assembling grew by 77 percent in 07 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Bureau of Statistics, the manufacturing of machinery and equipment during the period under review grew by 80.11 percent. On month on month basis, the local tractors production grew by 164.76 percent as about 4,117 tractors were locally manufactured in January, 2024 as against the manufacturing of 1,555 tractors of the corresponding month of the last year. However, the provisional quantum indices of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) for January, 2024 released by the Pakistan

Tractor assembling in the country during first 07 months of current financial year increased 77 percent as compared to the assembling of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-January, 2023-24 about 27,835 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 15,725 tractors of the same period of last year. According to the provisional quantum indices of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) for January, 2024 released by the Pakistan

## EU Ambassador calls on Minister for Commerce

ISLAMABAD (Online): EU Ambassador Riina Kionka called on Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and congratulates him for assuming the portfolio of Ministry of Commerce. Commerce Minister appreciated EU GSP Plus scheme which is beneficial for Pakistan exports to the EU. Ambassador Kionka informed on importance of adhering to international core conventions on human rights, labor rights, environmental standards, and good governance to maintain this status. Minister Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to implementation of conventions and assured full cooperation.

## E-rozgar centers providing top notch facilities to freelancers

ISLAMABAD (APP): E-rozgar centers, established by the government, are providing top-notch facilities to freelancers, including high-speed internet, UPS, training centers, individual cabins, meeting rooms, and separate office rooms for startups. According to an official from the Ministry of IT, this initiative aims to propel IT exports to a remarkable \$10 billion annually. Through a robust public-private partnership model, these centers are poised to significantly enhance the capacity and income of freelancers.

## PEC announces 'Seed Funding Scheme for Engineering Startups'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee (ICE) has invited engineering startups to submission of business proposals under its 'Seed Funding Scheme for Engineering Startups'. The business proposals addressing key challenges and opportunities in the engineering sector with a focus on sustainable technology development in Agri-tech and Smart-tech are sought from the engineers. About the thematic areas for this scheme, the official of PEC said that the themes for the proposals are Agri-tech and Smart-Tech. Agri-tech is crucial to

enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability in the sector of agriculture such as food security, environmental sustainability, and increasing demand for agricultural products, integration of technology in agriculture continues to evolve, offering new opportunities for innovation and improvement in farming practices. It also emphasizes the adoption of waste-to-product and waste-to-energy approaches to reduce environmental impact. Smart-tech plays a pivotal role in modernizing various sectors with its efficiency and innovation.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb exchanging views with Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salim Alzaabi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during meeting held in Islamabad.

## BankIslami's Ehad Sukuk II listed on PSX with gong ceremony

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) organized a gong ceremony on Wednesday to mark the listing of BankIslami Pakistan Limited's Islamic financial instrument of Ehad Sukuk II, a fully paid up, rated, perpetual, unsecured, subordinated, non-cumulative and contingent convertible Mudaraba Sukuk. The issue size was of PKR 1,000 million, out of which Sukuks of PKR 850 million (85% of issue size) were issued to the pre-IPO investors and Sukuks of PKR 150 million (15% of issue size) were offered to the general public by way of Initial Public Offering, according to a press statement issued by PSX. The issue price or par value of each Sukuk is PKR 5,000, with an expected profit rate of 1 month KIBOR + 2.5% per annum to be paid out monthly. The instrument has a perpetual tenor. The purpose of the Issue was to raise capital towards the issuer's Additional Tier I for Capital Adequacy ratio as per guidelines set by the State Bank of Pakistan. The Bankers to the issue (for the retail portion) were Meezan Bank Limited, United Bank Limited, and BankIslami Pakistan Limited. The designated Market Maker is JS Global Capital Limited and the Issue Agent is Pak Brunei Investment Company. The public subscription for the instrument took place on February 20 - 21, 2024. The public subscription for the Sukuk was highly successful with the Sukuk being oversubscribed by 56.23%. While the Sukuks offered to the general public were PKR 150 million, the total amount received against the public subscription was PKR



BAHAWALPUR: Women standing in a queue to purchase fruits and vegetables on subsidized rates at Ramadan Model Bazaar.

## Wilmar unit to make further investment in Pak-listed Unity Foods

ISLAMABAD: Wilmar Pakistan Holdings Pte. Ltd. ("WPH"), a wholly owned direct subsidiary of Wilmar International Limited), Unity Foods Agro (Private) Limited ("UFA"), a 52% subsidiary of WPH and certain shareholders of Unity Foods Limited ("UFL") have, through Arif Habib Limited (in its capacity as the manager to the public offer), made a public announcement to the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited of their intention to acquire up to 277,070,908 shares of UFL in the public offer, at the price that complies with the pricing formula and other applicable Pakistan laws and regulations including the Securities Act 2015 and Listed Companies (Substantial Acquisition of Voting Shares and Takeovers) Regulations 2017 ("PAI"). UFL, a public company listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited, is principally involved in the manufacturing and processing of edible oils, industrial fats, flour and various feed ingredients for Pakistan's poultry and livestock sectors. Wilmar International Limited ("WIL"), an esteemed Fortune 500 company, reaffirms its

commitment to Pakistan's economy through its investment in Unity Foods Limited ("UFL"), demonstrating confidence in the resilience and potential of Pakistan's economic landscape. This collaboration not only strengthens bilateral business ties but also underscores Unity Foods Limited's pivotal role in attracting foreign investment, fostering economic growth, and facilitating development in Pakistan. Wilmar International Limited is the ultimate acquirer or the ultimate controlling shareholder of Wilmar Pakistan Holdings Pte. Ltd.

## Dr. Khalid Maqbool urges provinces to harmonize food business rules

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has called upon the provincial governments to harmonize rules related to food businesses. In separate letters addressed to each chief ministers of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan, Dr. Siddiqui highlighted the need for uniformity to ensure food safety and quality nationwide. The minister said the existing disparities in regulations and enforcement mechanisms among provinces and federal agencies have

resulted in inconsistencies, inefficiencies and potential gaps in ensuring the safety and quality of food products available to consumers nationwide and for import and export purposes. He emphasized the role of the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) as the national standards body and advocated for streamlining standards to prevent duplication of efforts between PSQCA and provincial authorities. He said PSQCA is the sole national standards body to establish standards for all food and non-food products, services and processes. "After the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, provinces started establishing their own standards which are against the international best practices", the letter said. The minister noted that manufacturers were suffering because of the duplication of these activities by PSQCA and provincial food authorities. The minister said the Council of Common Interest has decided to standardize regulations and designate PSQCA as the primary authority for standards, certification, and labeling.

## Rupee gains 23 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday strengthened by 23 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.40 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.63. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.7 and Rs281.45, respectively. The price of the Euro remained unchanged to close at Rs302.35, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.83, whereas an increase of 02 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound.

## Both masses, govt have to pay for more increase in energy cost: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Mian Zahid Hussain, Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that more increase in electricity, gas, and oil prices would be cruel and both masses and government would have to pay for it. Talking to business community here on Wednesday, he said that continued price spikes can lead to a political crisis, which will be dangerous for the economy, stabilizing it steadily. The business leader said that development was only possible if capital was diverted to industry and agriculture and industry.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Trade and Industry presiding over a meeting of Punjab Small Industries Corporation.

## Gold rates up by Rs.500 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs.500 and was sold at Rs.227,800 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.227,300 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.429 to Rs.195,302 from Rs.194,873 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.179,027 from Rs.178,634, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.2,580 and Rs.2,211.93 respectively.

## SBP's insight to maintain interest rates at 22 percent: Shahid

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt has said that it was the insight of the State Bank of Pakistan to maintain the interest rate at 22 percent. In a statement issued on Wednesday, he said that it was impossible to cut interest rates before the IMF review's outcome, which disappointed the business community as they were demanding and anticipating a cut in the rates. Shahid Rasheed stated that the economic situation was improving, and inflation was likely to drop to 20 percent next month, so the Monetary Policy Committee of the State Bank may consider reducing interest rates in its next meeting. The people should stop dreaming of a development budget which was impossible in the current tough conditions, he maintained. The business leader said that a lower interest rate at this stage would have increased inflation while the rupee value would have decreased.



QUETTA: People buying sugars from Ramadan Sasta Bazaar established near Joint Road.

# Ukraine's survival in danger, warns Pentagon chief

**Monitoring Desk**  
RAMSTEIN BASE: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday warned that Ukraine's survival was in danger and sought to convince allies that the United States was committed to Kyiv, even as Washington has essentially run out of money to continue arming Ukrainian forces.

Republican House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson has so far refused to call a vote on a bill that would provide \$60 billion more for Ukraine and the White House has been scrambling to find ways to send assistance to Kyiv, which has been battling Russian forces for more than two years.

Austin is leading the monthly meeting known as

the Ukraine defence contact group (UDCG), held at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, of about 50 allies that have been militarily supporting Ukraine.

"Ukraine's survival is in danger," Austin said in a press conference after the meeting. "Our allies and partners continue to step up, the United States must also," he added.

Austin, who is traveling for the first time this year since prostate cancer treatment, did not say how Washington would support Ukraine without additional funding. Officials say the lack of funding available is already having an impact on the ground in Ukraine and Ukrainian forces are having to manage scarce resources. "I think our allies are

acutely aware of our funding situation and the Ukrainians more so than anyone because of the shortages that are resulting from us not being able to supply them," a senior US defence official said. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appealed to Kyiv's allies on Tuesday to supply more air defences, saying Russia had launched 130 missiles, more than 320 attack drones and almost 900 guided bombs in attacks this month alone.

Last week the Biden administration said it would send \$300 million in military assistance to Ukraine, but added that it was an extraordinary move after unexpected savings from military contracts the Pentagon had made.



Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres looks on during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council at U.N. headquarters on the maintenance of International Peace and Security Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in New York City, US.

# UN chief invokes film, warns of nuclear disaster

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres invoked Oscar-winning film Oppenheimer on Monday as he warned that the world faced the highest risk of nuclear war in decades.

At a Security Council session called by Japan, Guterres said that the biopic about the morally conflicted father of the atomic bomb "brought the harsh reality of nuclear doomsday to vivid life for millions around the world."

"Humanity cannot survive a sequel to Oppenheimer," Guterres said. "We meet at a time when geopolitical tensions and mistrust have escalated the risk of nuclear warfare to its highest point in decades," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made thinly veiled threats to use nuclear weapons as he

warns the West against its support for Ukraine, which Moscow invaded more than two years ago. Without naming Putin, Guterres said, "Nuclear saber-rattling must stop." "Threats to use nuclear weapons in any capacity are unacceptable," he said. Elsewhere in the world, tensions surrounding nuclear-armed North Korea have continued to rise and Iran has been enriching uranium closer to the level needed if it decides to build an atom bomb.

Israel, the Middle East's only nuclear-armed power albeit an undeclared one, has been at war since Oct 7. Guterres called on the United States and Russia to resume negotiations, at a standstill since the Ukraine war, on a successor to the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty which expires in early 2026.

# Putin to visit China in May for talks with Xi

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: Russian President Vladimir Putin will travel to China in May for talks with Xi Jinping, in what could be the Kremlin chief's first overseas trip of his new presidential term, according to five sources familiar with the matter.

Western governments on Monday condemned Putin's re-election as unfair and undemocratic. But China, India and North Korea congratulated the veteran leader on extending his rule by a further six years, highlighting geopolitical fault lines that have widened since Russia's

2022 invasion of Ukraine. "Putin will visit China," one of the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters. The details were independently confirmed by four other sources, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. Another of the sources said Putin's trip to China would probably take place in the second half of May. Two of the sources said the Putin visit would come before Xi's planned trip to Europe. The Kremlin, when asked about the Reuters report, said information on Putin's visits would be released closer to the date.

# Clans step in to protect Gaza aid

**Monitoring Desk**  
CAIRO: Armed and masked men from an array of clans and factions have started providing security to aid convoys in Gaza, Palestinian officials and sources in the Hamas group say. Video footage obtained by Reuters showed a convoy of trucks entering Gaza City with foreign aid overnight, watched by several men armed with AK-47 assault rifles and others wielding sticks.

With Israeli forces sworn to eliminating Hamas since its deadly Oct 7 raid on Israel.

# Armenia's PM says he must return disputed areas to Azerbaijan or face war

**Monitoring Desk**  
YEREVAN: Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that Armenia may face a war with Azerbaijan if it does not compromise with Baku on returning some strategic Azerbaijani territories that Armenia has controlled since the early 1990s.

Pashinyan was speaking during a Monday meeting with residents of border areas in northern Armenia's Tavush region, close to a string of deserted Azerbaijani villages that

Yerevan has controlled since the opening phases of the conflict in the early 1990s. TASS quoted Pashinyan as saying in a video of the meeting circulated by his government: "Now we can leave here, let's go and tell [Azerbaijan] that no, we are not going to do anything. This means that at the end of the week a war will begin." Pashinyan has repeatedly signalled in recent weeks that he is willing to return the villages to Azerbaijan.

# Israeli strikes target 'Hezbollah' inside Syria

**Monitoring Desk**  
AMMAN: Israel launched missiles at several military targets outside the Syrian capital Damascus on Tuesday, Syria's defence ministry said, in what regional intelligence and Syrian sources said were stepped up strikes on fortifications of Hezbollah.

Syrian air defences intercepted Israeli "missiles and shot down some of them", the ministry said in a statement, adding they caused only material damage.



Palestinians gather to receive free food, even as Gaza residents face alarming levels of hunger during the month of Ramadan.

# Canada parliament vote on backing Palestinian statehood hits delay

**Monitoring Desk**  
OTTAWA: Last-minute parliamentary wrangling on Monday delayed a vote by Canadian legislators on a non-binding motion to back Palestinian statehood, an idea that looked set to deepen splits inside the ruling Liberal Party.

The original motion was drawn up by the minority left-leaning New Democrats (NDP), who are helping keep Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals in power and are unhappy by what they see as his failure to do enough to protect the civilian population in Gaza.

The initial version called on Canada to "officially recognize the State of Palestine" - a step that no member of the Group of Seven industrialized nations has taken.

After back room nego-

tiations between the NDP and the Liberals, that wording was dropped in favor of language calling on the international community to work toward the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution.

But Liberal and opposition legislators in the House of Commons complained they had had no notice of the new wording and demanded the chance to debate it. Proceedings were suspended, and it was unclear when they would be resumed.

Last week, Canada said it had paused non-lethal military exports to Israel since January.

Trudeau, while asserting Israel's right to defend itself, has taken an increasingly critical stance over the military campaign in Gaza.

# Moldovan president launches campaign to promote EU referendum

**Monitoring Desk**  
CHISINAU: President Maia Sandu launched a campaign to promote an upcoming referendum on Moldova's push to join the European Union on Monday, calling on civil leaders to rally support for the country's accession to the 27-member bloc.

Moldova, a former Soviet republic of 2.6 million led by a pro-European government, applied for EU membership in 2022 and received a draft framework for accession negotiations in March, along with neighbouring Ukraine.

The country's relations with Russia have become strained since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which Chisinau has staunchly condemned.

Sandu announced plans in December to hold a referendum later this year on whether to join the EU.

# In New Zealand, Chinese minister calls for working with 'friends'

**Monitoring Desk**  
WELLINGTON: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a rare visit to New Zealand on Monday, stressing the need to work with "friends" in the face of the "tumultuous international situation".

The trip marks the start of a diplomatic blitz through New Zealand and Australia, Wang's first visit to either country since 2017.

The whistle-stop tour is expected to focus heavily on trade as Beijing looks to lessen the pain from slowing economic growth at home.

Speaking in the capital Wellington before a meeting with his New Zealand counterpart, Wang said the trip was also a chance to shore up diplomatic ties that have come under strain as Beijing adopts an increasingly aggressive stance on issues

such as Taiwan and the South China Sea.

"In the face of the current tumultuous international situation, we are willing to strengthen strategic communication with our friends in New Zealand on international and regional issues of common concern," Wang said.

"And we will work together to maintain peace and stability in the region and the world," he added before his closed-door meeting with New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters.

New Zealand is part of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance alongside the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

But Wellington has been criticised for taking a softer line on China - putting its trading relationship ahead of its allies' security concerns.

# Somali forces, foreign navies prepare attack on hijacked ship, police say

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAROWE: Somali police and international navies were preparing on Monday to attack a commercial ship that was hijacked by pirates last week, the Puntland region's police force said, two days after Indian commandos rescued another cargo vessel held by pirates.

The MV Abdullah was hijacked off the coast of Somalia last week, the latest of more than 20 attacks since November by Somali pirates who had laid dormant for nearly a decade.

On Saturday, the Indian navy rescued another cargo vessel, the Maltese-flagged MV Ruen, which had been seized in December, freeing its 17 crew members and arresting 35 pirates.



Ireland's Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar speaks to the media as he announces his resignation, in Dublin, Ireland.

# Amini's death in custody 'unlawful': UN mission

**Monitoring Desk**  
GENEVA: A fact-finding mission mandated by the United Nations said on Monday the death of Mahsa Amini in custody of Iran's morality police was unlawful and caused by violence and that Iranian women still suffer systematic discrimination.

The death of 22-year-old Amini, a Kurdish Iranian woman, in September 2022 while in custody for allegedly flouting Iran's Islamic dress code unleashed months of protests and the biggest challenge to the Islamic Republic's clerical leaders in decades.

"Our investigation established that her death was unlawful and caused by physical violence in the cus-

tody of state authorities," Sara Hossain, chairperson of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran, told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The fact-finding mission found the protests that followed were marked by extra-judicial executions, arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment, as well as rape and sexual violence.

"These acts were conducted in the context of a widespread and systematic attack against women and girls, and other persons expressing support for human rights," Hossain said.

"Some of these serious violations of human rights thus rose to the level of crimes against humanity."

# Egyptians thought Regeni was British spy, Italian court told

**Monitoring Desk**  
ROME: Egyptian police detained an Italian student in Cairo because they thought he was a British spy, taking him to a security facility where he was tortured and murdered, an Italian prosecutor told a Rome court on Monday.

Italy has charged four Egyptian security agents with kidnapping and killing Giulio Regeni, a postgraduate student at Britain's Cambridge University, in Cairo in 2016.

The four men are being tried in absentia and have never responded publicly to the accusations.

# Many hospitals in China stop newborn delivery services as birth rate drops

**Monitoring Desk**  
HONG KONG: Many hospitals in China have stopped offering newborn delivery services this year, state-backed news outlet Daily Economic News reported, with industry experts warning of an "obstetric winter" due to declining demand amid a record drop in new births.

Hospitals in various provinces including in eastern Zhejiang and southern Jiangxi have in the past two months announced that they will close their obstetric departments, according to no-

tices viewed by Reuters. The Fifth People's Hospital of Ganzhou City in Jiangxi said on its official WeChat account that obstetric services would be suspended from March 11. Zhejiang's Jiangshan Hospital of Traditional Medicine announced on its WeChat page that its obstetrics business would stop from Feb. 1. The closures come as Chinese policymakers grapple with how to boost young couples' desire to have children as authorities face a growing demographic headache of a rapidly ageing society.

# New Banksy mural depicting tree foliage appears in London

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: A new artwork by British street artist Banksy has appeared in London, using green paint sprayed across the side of a building to mimic the foliage of a real, heavily pruned tree that stands a few metres in front of it.

A photo of the mural was posted on Banksy's official Instagram account on Monday, where the artist usually claims responsibility for works of art to his more than 12 million followers.

# China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh state 'absurd': India

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: India's foreign ministry said on Tuesday that China was making "absurd claims" over Arunachal Pradesh, adding that the north-eastern state which shares a border with China will always be an "integral and inalienable part of India".

China claims Arunachal Pradesh to be a part of southern Tibet. New Delhi rejects the claim, saying Arunachal Pradesh has always been a part of India.

"Repeating baseless arguments in this regard does not lend such claims any validity," Randhir Jaiswal, India's foreign ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday.

He was responding to last week's comments made by Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang, spokesman of China's Ministry of National Defence, days after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugu-

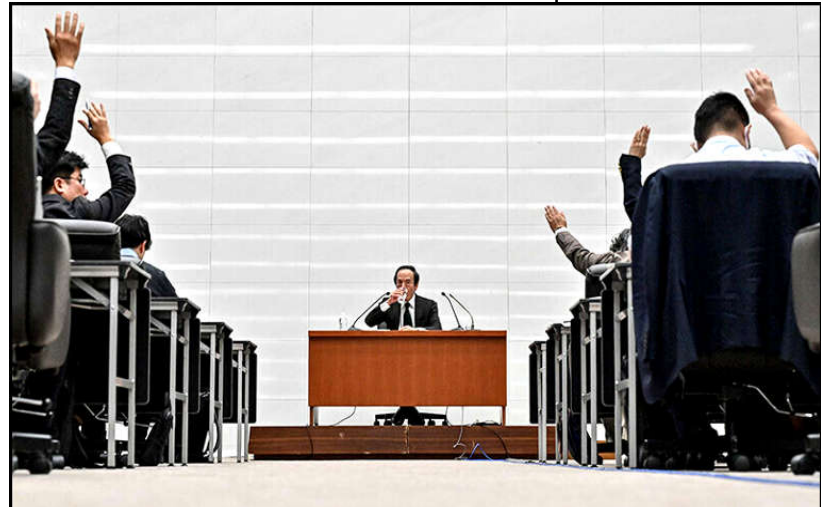
rated a road tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh on March 9.

Zhang said in a statement that India should "stop taking any moves that complicate the border issue and earnestly maintain peace and stability in the border areas", adding that the tunnel's inauguration "runs counter to the efforts made by both sides to ease the border situation".

The nuclear-armed neighbours share a 3,000-kilometre frontier, much of it poorly demarcated.

At least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed in 2020 in clashes along their border in the western Himalayas.

The militaries of both countries have fortified positions and deployed extra troops and equipment along the border since those clashes. Both sides fought a border war in 1962.



Bank of Japan (BoJ) governor Kazuo Ueda (C) has a drink of water as journalists raise their hands to ask questions during a press conference after a two-day monetary policy meeting at the BOJ headquarters in Tokyo.

# Pakistan needs 'Economic Long March' to achieve development, prosperity: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said that the country needed an 'Economic Long March' to move on a consistent path of development and prosperity.

Participating in a private television programme, he urged opposition parties to play a positive role in Parliament so that the country could move forward to achieve the goal of economic stability effectively.

He criticized a political party for making failed attempts to dent the country's talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), terming it 'Economic Terrorism.'

Ahsan Iqbal was of the view that the financial matters of the country could not be sustained on loans permanently and stressed the need to increase production capacity, suggesting imposing an export emergency in the country.

Last year, the Ministry of Planning set up a 5-Es framework consisting of

Export, Energy, Equity, E-Pakistan and Environment, under which a comprehensive plan had been prepared for the implementation of the framework and suggestions from all the ministries in this regard to be sought.

Replying to a question, the federal minister said all chambers of commerce would have to play their due role so that more efficiency could be achieved in agriculture, information technology and other sectors with value addition of the products.

Citing the examples of developing countries like Korea and Japan, Ahsan Iqbal said these countries had progressed by increasing their production capacity. He vowed to lead the country towards development during the next five years under the dynamic leadership of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). To another question, the minister said he could not even think of rolling back the 18th Constitutional Amendment due to the sensitivity of its nature.



QUETTA: Chairman OGRA Masroor Khan meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi chairing a high level meeting, at NACTA Headquarters in Islamabad.

## Syed Murad Ali Shah assures full assistance: GoB delegation visits Karachi to bring Sindh model of health in Balochistan

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: A delegation of Government of Balochistan visited Karachi to review healthcare facilities in Sindh and establish the standard healthcare institutions in Balochistan on pattern of Sindh.

The delegation comprising Secretary Health, Abdullah Khan, Secretary Finance, Babar Khan and provincial coordinator of BICHP, Sadiq Khan Kakar reviewed the measures taken in health sector and observed the existing health

models there.

During the visit, they also met the Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah and conveyed best wishes of Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti to him.

They also thanked the Sindh Government on the assistance offered in the health sector.

The Sindh Chief Minister welcomed the high ups came from Balochistan to Sindh for observing the healthcare facilities.

He directed the concerned authorities of Sindh to extend full assistance to Balochistan. He particularly directed to Chief Secretary Sindh and his team to support the high ups of Balochistan to adopt and implement best health models in Balochistan.

It may be mentioned here that the delegation of Balochistan officers would present its recommendations to the Chief Minister Balochistan after reviewing different measures taken under public-private partnership.

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## NACTA to be restructured on modern lines: Naqvi

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi here on Wednesday visited National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) headquarters.

He presided over an important meeting where several major decisions were taken, out of which one was to restructure NACTA on modern lines as well as to place it on the front in war against terrorism.

The meeting also decided to summon a meeting of the Coordination Committee of the National Action Plan in the next week which will be presided over

by Interior Minister.

The minister said that instead of taking action after every incident of terrorism, we must take early action to eliminate terrorists and their facilitators.

He called for a detailed report on the efficiency of all provincial Counter Terrorism Departments (CTD).

He said that establishment of National CTD is the need of the hour for complete elimination of terrorism. Naqvi said a comprehensive strategy should be formulated against terrorism and extremism adding that the National Action Plan should be fully implemented.

## PM for early conclusion of Pak-UK Enhanced Strategic Partnership agreement

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing his desire to elevate the Pakistan-UK relationship to the next level, emphasized the importance of early conclusion of the Enhanced Strategic Partnership (ESP) agreement.

The prime minister, in a meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, who called on him, highlighted the government's priorities, in particular the importance of navigating through the economic challenges facing the country, a PM Office press release said.

In this regard, he un-

derlined the need to enhance bilateral cooperation in trade and investment, climate, and people-to-people contacts as well as developing convergences on regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Foreign Secretary Lord David Cameron for their messages of felicitation on his re-election and said that he looked forward to working closely with the UK leadership to further strengthen bilateral relations. He said Pakistan and the UK had longstanding, historic relations and shared

immense political goodwill while cooperating closely over a wide range of areas.

The prime minister called for the early resumption of PIA flights between Pakistan and the UK to help strengthen linkages between the two countries and assuage concerns of the 1.6 million strong Pakistani diaspora in the UK.

He requested the high commissioner to convey his best wishes to King Charles III and prayed for his early recovery to full health. The prime minister also expressed the hope that the King would visit Pakistan, as soon as his health permitted him to travel.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner H.E. Jane Marriott called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## PM grieved over deaths in Harnai coal mine blast

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed grief over the loss of lives consequent to an explosion inside a coal mine in Harnai district of Balochistan.

He prayed to Allah Almighty for peace for the departed souls and sympathised with the bereaved family members. PM instructed the authorities concerned to accelerate the rescue operation for the trapped miners and extend all possible medical treatment to those injured.

## Shaza, PTA chairman discuss 5G spectrum auction

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja and Chairman of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Maj General Hafeez Ur Rehman on Wednesday discussed matters concerning the 5G spectrum auction, connectivity, and the Telecom Industry.

The minister during a meeting said, that providing affordable and high-quality telecom and internet services to the masses remains a top priority for the government.

She reiterated the government's commitment to promoting digitization in the country and resolving related issues.

Shaza highlighted that the Ministry of Information Technology is steadfast in its determination to collaborate with the telecom sector.

She assured that the government is dedicated to addressing the concerns of the telecom industry.

The minister said, "We will empower the youth by integrating them into the digital ecosystem and offering dignified employment opportunities."

## General election 2024 PTI founder moves SC for formation of JC to probe into alleged rigging

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI founder Imran Khan has resorted to Supreme Court (SC) for investigations into alleged rigging in general election 2024.

The petition has been filed through Hamid Khan advocate.

The petitioner has demanded through the petition that a Judicial Commission (JC) comprising neutral judges be constituted to probe into rigging. The allegations of alleged rigging and changing the result be investigated.

Federal and provincial governments and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) have been made respondents in the petition.

The petitioner has taken plea in the petition that massive rigging has taken place in general election 2024. In several constituencies PTI candidates had won the election but they were not declared as winners.

got defeated in any way by polls. The matters of forms 45 and 47 are clear on all of us.

It was further said in the petition that PTI has irrefutable evidence wherefrom it becomes clear that candidates of other parties were got won the election in some constituencies through rigging.

The petitioner has requested SC to constitute such JC which investigates all the matters related to this election besides probing into the rigging matters. This commission should comprise impartial judges.

It was further said in the petition that commission be constituted comprising SC serving unbiased and neutral judges.

The allegations of alleged rigging and changing the result be investigated.

It was further requested in the petition that federal and Punjab governments be suspended.

## Minister lauded security forces to foil terrorist attack on GPA

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Naqvi lauded the security forces for thwarting the terrorist attack on the Guard Port Authority complex on Wednesday.

In his message, the minister said that the security forces bravely foiled the terrorist attack. He said that the security forces personnel who thwarted the nefarious intentions of the terrorists are the heroes of the nation.

## SSP distributes appreciation certificates among IOs

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Jaffarabad Ms. Faryal Fareed distributed certificates of appreciation among investigating officers and police personnel for completing the cases against accused involved crimes activities. She said that the Court had given sentences to accused on the basis of best investigation of police.

Sub-Inspector Mohammad Ali Chalgari, Sub-Inspector Ghulam Hussain Babar Jamil, Assistant Sub-Inspector Abdul Sattar Bhat Head Constable Abdul Jalil and Constable Habib Rehman were involved. She said that the SHO and Investigating officers should investigate the cases diligently and use their skills to complete them on which they would be fully encouraged.



ISLAMABAD: The US Ambassador Donald Blome calls on Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan to discuss and explore avenues for enhancing bilateral trade and investment between the two countries.

## Crackdown continues against illegal medicines; two medical stores sealed in Quetta

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The crackdown is continued against the illegal medicines in the provincial metropolis.

According to the official handout, two medical stores selling illegal medicines Near Eastern bypass were sealed.

The senior Drug Inspector Sarwar Khan Kakar conducted raid on the two stores and recovered illegal and unregistered medicines from there.

The services of FIA were also taken for knowing the real means of bringing illegal and unregistered medicines during the crackdown.

## Committee constituted to inquire about Harnai coal mine incident

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The committee has been constituted for inquiry of the coal mine mishap occurred in Harnai on Wednesday.

According to an official notification issued here, the five-member inquiry committee has been formed by the Mines and Mineral Development, Government of Balochistan.

As per the notification, Additional Secretary Mines, Dr Attiq Shahwani would head the inquiry committee.

The committee would fix the responsibility besides investigating the incident, and would present its report within three days.

It may be mentioned here that 12 coal mine workers had died in the Harnai coal mine incident occurred on late Tuesday night.

## SC serves notice to Qasim Suri

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday served notices to former deputy speaker of the National Assembly Qasim Suri after the registrar's office submitted its report regarding the delay in fixation of his appeal for hearing against the decision of re-election in his constituency.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa heard the case.

## Sports competitions to start on March 23 in Balochistan: Shahwani

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA (APP): Sports and Youth Affairs Department of Balochistan has released the schedule of sports competitions in connection of Pakistan Day to be held on March 23 across Balochistan including the provincial capital Quetta.

In this regard, Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs of Balochistan, Dr. Javed Anwar Shahwani presided over a high-level

meeting in which important decisions were taken regarding the department's performance, problems and their solutions. The senior officials of the department participated in the meeting.

In the meeting, Secretary Sports said that the sports competitions would be started from March 23 to continue till March 29 in all districts including the provincial capital.



QUETTA: Members of Joint Action Committee University of Balochistan are holding protest demonstration against non-payment of their salaries, in Quetta.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb calls on by Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey.

## Pakistan Army & other security forces vigilant day & night to protect homeland: Samina Zehri

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The entire nation is standing by the side of the army until the end of terrorism from the country and terrorists will never succeed in their evil intentions.

These views were expressed on Wednesday by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her statement condemning the ongoing incidents of terrorism in the country.

She said that in the terrorist attack in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, terrorist organizations originating in Afghanistan are involved, for which we strongly condemn, Pakistan's action in Afghanistan is justified.

She said that all the martyrs, including Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali and Captain Ahmed Badr, are heroes of the na-

tion and the entire nation and their families are proud of the martyrs' eternal sacrifice for the country.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that those who sacrificed their lives for the protection of Pakistan have proved that the protection of Pakistan is in strong hands and no one can look at the enemy of Pakistan with a lecherous eye.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said that the brave soldiers and officers of Pakistan Army sacrificed their lives for the survival of the country, for which the nation pays tribute to the martyrs.

She said that the courage, perseverance and patience of the families of the martyrs are a source of strength for the nation and the security forces.

She also said that the martyrs themselves got the status of martyrdom but they saved the lives of the people and brought the terrorists to hell. Soon these cowardly terrorists will be brought to their end.

She said that cowardly enemies cannot shake our firm resolve with such actions. Every drop of blood of martyrs will be counted.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the determination of the security forces and the nation will not decrease until the end of the last terrorist. She said that the entire nation is with its security forces until the elimination of terrorists from the country and will not hesitate to make any sacrifice for this purpose.