

# Independent

Member APNS &amp; CPNE

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Ph: 2841470/2841473 REG: No. BC-116 B/ID-445 Vdt XXV No 212, Ramzan 11, 1445 AH Friday March 22, 2024 Pages 08, Price Rs.15

## Islamabad not seeking armed conflict with Kabul: Asif

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Days after Pakistan hit outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) targets inside Afghanistan, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that Islamabad does not want any "armed conflict" with Kabul.

"Force is the last resort. We do not want to have an armed conflict with Afghanistan," Asif said while speaking to the Voice of America.

The defence minister's remarks come as the neighbouring countries have experienced a spike in their already tense bilateral relations over increasing terrorist attacks by the TTP and other banned outfits, which are based in Afghanistan, inside Pakistani territory.

On Monday, Pakistan carried out intelligence-based operations (IBOs) targeting TTP's Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group which is responsible for the March 16 attack in Mir Ali, North Waziristan and multiple

other terrorist attacks in the country.

Islamabad's action came following a deadly attack on Pakistani forces which resulted in the martyrdom of seven soldiers including a lieutenant colonel and captain.

Pakistan has repeatedly called on the Afghan interim government to prevent its soil from being used against Pakistan by TTP and other militant organisations — a claim vehemently denied by Kabul.

Terming Pakistan's military action inside Afghanistan as a necessary message against increasing cross-border terrorism, the minister called on the Afghan interim regime to "control" the TTP and "not let them start a war" with Pakistan while living in Afghanistan.

"We cannot continue like this," he said, adding that Islamabad will be forced to retaliate if the TTP continues its attacks.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with Chief Ministers of all the provinces.

## FM calls for increasing IAEA technical cooperation fund

BRUSSELS (APP): Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has called for ensuring access to technology, financing nuclear power projects, and increasing IAEA technical cooperation fund for further development of nuclear energy.

In his remarks at the Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels today, he said provision of nuclear power reactors, nuclear fuel and other associated infrastructure to the developing countries in accordance with respective safeguard obligations should be ensured. He said financing for nuclear energy, and multilateral development funds, need to be catalyzed.

The Minister said International Atomic Energy Agency's capacity for technical assistance in peaceful uses of nuclear energy may be facilitated through either a dedicated funding stream or through enhanced allocations to existing technical cooperation fund.

Ishaq Dar said Pakistan will remain a steadfast partner of the international community and the IAEA in further enhancing role of nuclear technology for energy and other peaceful purposes.

Highlighting the potential of Pakistan in Nuclear Energy sector, he said the country has hundred reactor-years' experience of safely operating nuclear power plants.

He revealed that nuclear energy constitutes around eight percent of our installed electric generation capacity as currently Pakistan has six operating nuclear power plants generating 3,530 MW of electricity. The Foreign Minister reaffirmed that Pakistan stands ready to share its experience and expertise in peaceful uses of nuclear technology with the world as country has fully trained human resource capable to support nuclear power infrastructure.



BRUSSELS: Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar meeting with Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Mariano Grossi, on the sidelines of the Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels.

## PTI terms Donald Lu's statement on ciphergate as lie

ISLAMABAD (INP): Reacting to the US assistant secretary of state's testimony before a Congressional panel, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has termed Donald Lu's statement on ciphergate a "lie", and demanded reopening inquiry into the controversy.

"I've held a detailed meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan today," Barrister Gohar said while speaking to journalists outside

Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail on Thursday.

The politico demands a "clarification statement" from former Pakistani ambassador to the US Muhammad Asad Majeed after Lu's testimony in which the latter, once again, rejected former prime minister Khan's allegations that the United States engineered his ouster from power by supporting the then opposition's no-confidence motion in April 2022.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs special session of the Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council.

## PM vows to tackle economic challenges, protect vulnerable

Says deep-rooted structural reforms needed during term of new IMF deal; Civil-military leadership vows to ensure continuation of policies; COAS Gen Munir reassures "fullest support of Pakistan Armed Forces to backstop" govt's economic initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said the government was going to take tough economic decisions to steer the country out of crisis assuring to protect downtrodden segments of the society.

He said that the burden of these measures would primarily fall on the wealthy and elite, with safeguards in place to protect the interests of the poor and vulnerable.

Addressing the meeting of the Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) here, the prime minister said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had concluded the review for issuance of the last tranche of US\$1.1

billion that hopefully be received by next month.

After this, he said Pakistan also wanted to start another programme with the IMF for a period of three years during which the government will take strict measures to bring deep-rooted structural reforms in the country.

With the reforms, he said "we will succeed to gradually break the begging bowl and come out of debt trap".

The prime minister sought support of all political parties and the provincial governments to successfully implement the agenda of macro economic stability in the country.

"For this we will have to work together. With the support of all the provinces,

we will together resolve all the challenges and difficulties faced by the country", he added.

PM Shehbaz said the presence of chief ministers of all the provincial governments, Army Chief, and other concerned officials from across the country conveyed a clear message to the nation that all had gathered here for the cause of the country's development, prosperity and integrity.

He said the SIFC was formed in June 2023 to remove bottlenecks in the investment process and since then nine meetings of the Apex Committee had been held besides more than 200 relevant meetings. Consequently, he said a number of important decisions had been taken

and implemented under the umbrella of the Council.

The prime minister pointed out that when the PDM government took over the charge of the government in 2022, Pakistan was at the brink of bankruptcy but all the coalition partners decided to save the country from plunging into default by putting their politics at stake.

He said unfortunately a major chunk of the country's resources drained down in shape of corruption. "This year's target of tax collection is Rs 9 trillion but its potential was over Rs 1.3 trillion.

Similarly, he said the cases of the taxes worth of Rs 2.7 trillion were pending

Continued on page 2

## Abdul Wali leaves for Umrah: Speaker BA takes over as acting Governor

QUETTA: The Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai assumed the charge of acting Governor Balochistan and started performing his responsibilities here on Thursday.

It may be mentioned here that Governor Malik Abdul Wali Kakar went to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah.

## Terrorist Chakar Liaquat killed in Panjur operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): The security forces on Thursday killed a terrorist and injured the other two during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted on the night of March 20 and 21 in District Panjur.

During the conduct of operation, the Army troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location and resultantly terrorist Chakar Liaquat was eliminated, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

Weapon and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorist, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting on matters related to Federal Investigation Agency.

## Mohsin Naqvi orders countrywide crackdown against gas, electricity thefts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday making a major decision, tasked Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to initiate a crackdown across the country against power and gas thieves.

Chairing an important meeting at his office, the minister gave instructions to the Agency to take strict legal action against those involved in electricity and gas thefts.

The FIA officials informed the minister that special teams were already constituted to crack down

on electricity and gas thieves on the past instructions given in the last meeting.

Upon receiving a detailed report on Greece boat accident submitted by the FIA officials, the minister directed that all the elements involved in this tragedy must be brought to justice.

He also directed strict action against all the elements involved in human trafficking to curb this evil from the society.

The minister also directed to further tighten the cordon against those involved in the Hundi/Hawala business.

## Army chief calls on PM

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir has called on Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif.

The meeting was held before meeting of apex committee of SIFC.

Army chief took the PM into confidence on his visit to Saudi Arabia.

According to sources the two exchanged views on outcome of ongoing intelligence based operations against terrorism and overall national and internal security situation in the meeting.

The matters related to the Pakistan Army's operational matters were also discussed in the meeting.

Sources further said army chief took PM into confidence on his visit to Saudi Arabia.

PM expressed satisfaction over relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

It may be mentioned here that Secretary Health and Secretary Finance are on visit to Sindh to study health models and review the measures taken by Sindh government in health sector.

The Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti had directed them to visit Sindh in this regard.

## Pakistan reaffirms commitment to Iran Pakistan gas pipeline project

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan has reaffirmed commitment to Iran Pakistan gas pipeline project.

Responding to the queries of the media persons regarding yesterday's US congressional hearing, at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said it is the sovereign decision of Pakistani government to move forward on the project.

She made it clear that at this point there is no room for any discussion or waiver from any third party for the construction of the pipeline inside Pakistan's territory. She said Pakistan has also conveyed to the US authorities the importance of this project for its energy security.

When asked about the concerns raised at the US congressional hearing over

the alleged rigging in the general elections, the spokesperson said some statements made there reflected misunderstanding of Pakistan's domestic situation and electoral laws. She hoped to engage in meaningful discussion with the US to address these misunderstandings.

She said Pakistan values its close relations with the US and believes in constructive engagement with it. She said Pakistan respects the prerogative of legislative bodies to discuss international issues. She, however, said the deliberations of these legislative bodies should contribute promoting positive dynamics in bilateral ties based on mutual respect and understanding.

Responding to volley of questions regarding

Continued on page 2



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar exchanging views with Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of China during meeting held in Islamabad.

## Ataullah Tarar for devising mechanism to counter fake news regarding CPEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday emphasized the need to devise a mechanism at the government-to-government and media-to-media level to counter fake news regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Ataullah Tarar said this during a meeting with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zaidong who called on the

minister here. The Chinese Ambassador congratulated Ataullah Tarar on assuming the portfolio of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The CPEC, Pakistan-China strategic relations, ongoing cooperation in the media and film sector, and China-Pakistan Information Corridor were discussed in the meeting.

Discussions were held

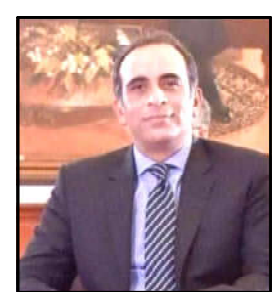
Continued on page 2

## Mubashir Hassan appointed PIO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior Information Officer of Grade 20 Mubashir Hassan was appointed as Executive Director General/Principal Information Officer (BS 21) of the Press Information Department (PID).

The appointment was made in accordance with sub-section 10 of the Civil Servants Act, 1973, said a notification issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Thursday.

Mubashir Hassan is a senior officer of Informa-



tion Group who has held various important positions and also successfully completed National Security and War Course 2024 from National Defense University Islamabad recently.

## Appellate Tribunal appointed for bye-elections in PB-20, PB-22

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: The Appellate Tribunal has been appointed for disposal of appeals against the decisions of the Returning Officers, regarding rejection or acceptance of the nomination papers of candidates for bye-elections in two constituencies of the Balochistan Province.

According to a notification issued here by the Election Commission of

Pakistan on Thursday, the Tribunal would consist of the judge of Balochistan High Court, Mr. Justice Muhammad Aamir Nawaz Rana.

The Tribunal would dispose of the appeals against decisions of the Returning Officers regarding rejection or acceptance of the papers of candidates for bye-elections in PB-20, Khuzdar-III and PB-22, Lasbela.

## Secretary Health & Secretary Finance visit NICVD Karachi, meet Executive Director & team

INDEPENDENT REPORT

QUETTA: The Secretary Health, Abdullah Khan visited the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) Karachi on Thursday.

The Secretary Finance, Babar Khan was also accompanied by him. During the visit, the Secretary Health and Secretary Finance met the former Executive Director of NICVD, Professor Nadeem Qamar, current Executive Director, Professor Tahir Saghir and his team members.

The former Executive Director NICVD talked

about the history of NICVD as how the institution was established?

He also apprised the visiting bureaucrats from Balochistan about the journey of NICVD as how it became the center of excellence in cardiac diseases in Pakistan.

The incumbent Executive Director Professor Tahir Saghir briefed about the progress and overall functioning of NICVD, besides its satellite centres and units of chest pain.

He said that the NICVD and centres are extending free services to the patients for prevention of heart diseases, their diag-

nosis, treatment and their rehabilitation.

During the course of meeting, it was discussed to establish satellite centers and chest pain units in Balochistan on pattern of NICVD so as to save the lives of heart patients.

It may be mentioned here that Secretary Health and Secretary Finance are on visit to Sindh to study health models and review the measures taken by Sindh government in health sector.

The Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti had directed them to visit Sindh in this regard.



KARACHI: Provincial Secretary Health Balochistan Abdullah Khan and Secretary Finance Babar Khan being briefed by former Executive Director NICVD Prof. Nadeem Qamar



## IHC orders arrangements for PTI founder's online meeting with lawyers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued the written judgment on a plea seeking meetings between PTI founder Imran Khan and his legal team.

The court in its verdict ordered the Adiala jail superintendent to arrange online meetings between the former prime minister and his lawyers till the resolution of the security issues.

IHC's Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan issued the judgment in which the court sought a report from the Adiala jail superintendent tomorrow (Friday) regarding the arrangement following court orders.

In the judgment, the court said that the PTI founder's lawyer had said that they were restricted from meeting their client due to security issues.

The IHC ordered the jail authorities to make arrangements to facilitate Imran Khan's online meetings with his legal team. They were directed to ensure the required internet speed for smooth huddles of the former prime minister.

On Adiala jail's superintendent's contention that the jail rules did not allow online meetings, the court said that the

## Pak, UK to strengthen bilateral trade

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, and British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms. Jane Marriott, on Thursday outlined key strategies to bolster the already robust trade relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom (UK).

The minister emphasized the deep-rooted political and historical ties between the two nations, underscoring the significant strides in trade and commerce, said a news release here.

The minister lauded the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), initiated in June 2023, as a pivotal opportunity for Pakistan to amplify its trade volumes with the UK.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Jordan's football team players are in action during FIFA World Cup qualifier Kickoff round match at the Jinnah Stadium, in the Federal Capital.

## Commemoration of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito's 64th Birthday

Independent Report

QUETTA: On the occasion of the 64th Birthday celebrations of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito of Japan on February 23, 2024, Hayatullah Khan Durrani (Pride-of-Performance), Secretary of the Pakistan Canoe and Kayak Federation and Founder/Chief Executive of Chiltan Adventurers Association Balochistan, as well as Hayat Durrani Water Sports Academy International (Pvt, Ltd) (HDWSA), spearheaded a meaningful tree planting initiative.



Mr. Durrani, distinguished as the first Pakistani recipient of the British Caving Legend Award in the United Kingdom, symbolically planted a white mulberry tree to extend wishes for His Majesty Emperor Naruhito's long and healthy life. Additionally, various other tree species were planted at the specially designated area, symbolizing the enduring bond of friendship between new generation of Pakistan and Japan, through sports, culture, and environmental defenders within the HDWSA premises.

This act underscores Mr. Hayatullah Khan Durrani's unwavering commitment to environmental conservation and his dedication to contributing to the Protect Environment Tree Plantation Project. The initiative, established by Mr. Durrani in 1986 at the renowned Hayat Durrani Water Sports Academy International (Pvt, Ltd) and its sprawling ranch at Hanna Lake, Quetta, is designed to promote environmental protection, sustainability, and ecosystem restoration.

The birthday of Emperor Naruhito, celebrated on 23rd February, holds profound significance as His Majesty was born on this day in 1960. Mr. Hayatullah Khan Durrani's thoughtful gesture to commemorate this occasion through tree planting reflects his deep respect and honor for His Majesty Emperor Naruhito and people of Japan.

## Jordan outplayed Pakistan in World Cup 2026 Qualifiers match by 3-0

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jordan outplayed Pakistan by 3-0 in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers match here at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Thursday.

Jordan's ace player Mousa Al Tamari scored two goals while his country mate Ali Olwan posted a goal in the game.

At the start of the first half, Tamari hit an early goal in the 2nd minute of the game. Tamari, on a pass from Al-Mardi, shot high into the air, leaving no chance of defense, thus opening the account for Jordan.

It was just seven minutes passed when Jordan won a penalty and Ali Olwan hit it high into the air

to extend the lead by 2-0 in the 9th minute of the first half. Jordan was up against Pakistan with 2-0 at the end of the first half.

As time passed by into the second half, Pakistani players tried with all their might to score goals but unfortunately went unlucky and it was once again Tamari who received a pass from Al Naimat and hit the ball high into the net for Jordan's third goal in the 86th minute.

Pakistan team goalkeeper Yousef Ijaz Butt performed top notch during the match and saved many 'sure goals' including a penalty. Jordan's Musa Al-Altamari was declared player of the match.

Jordan were in third place with four points in Group G of the Asian qualifiers while Pakistan was at the bottom after losing all their three games. Pakistan would now travel to Jordan for the away fixture on March 26.

The Shaheens need to win their remaining three games, which includes matches against Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan, in order to remain in the hunt for the World Cup.

It may be mentioned that Jordan football team visited Pakistan after a gap of 18 years as they last toured in 2006.

The second match between Pakistan and Jordan will be played in Jordan on March 26.

## Pakistan, Azerbaijan agree to deepen ties in diverse sectors

BRUSSELS (APP): Pakistan and Azerbaijan have agreed to further deepen their bilateral cooperation in all fields especially peaceful use of nuclear technology.

The understanding was reached during meeting between Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Bayramov Jeyhun on the sidelines of Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels, Belgium.

They discussed ways to enhance cooperation for peaceful use of nuclear energy in health and agriculture sector.

They noted that the two countries have already been



successfully collaborating in nuclear applications in Agriculture.

The Ministers reaffirmed the resolve to combat climate change through use of nuclear energy.

Ishaq Dar expressed Pakistan's readiness to share experience and expertise in peaceful uses of Nuclear Technology with Azerbaijan.



QUETTA: Secretary Forest Abdul Rauf Baloch planting a tree to launch Spring Tree Plantation Drive at SBK Women's University

## Pakistan reaffirms ...

Continued from page 1

Pakistan's recent targeted and intelligence based operation inside Afghanistan, the spokesperson clarified it was not directed against the government and the institutions or people of Afghanistan but it was against terrorist hideouts and sanctuaries. She said Pakistan has on multiple occasions shared concrete evidence and intelligence with the Afghan authorities about the presence of terrorist sanctuaries inside Afghanistan. She said it is a reality that terrorists especially the TTP have their basis in Afghanistan. This is not just Pakistan's assertion but also confirmed by the international observers including reports by the United Nations.

The spokesperson said Pakistan respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and

looking forward to work together to find joint solutions in countering terrorism and preventing any terrorist entity from sabotaging bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. She emphasized we should be partners in peace and partner against terrorism.

To a question, the spokesperson said Pakistan is committed to protecting CPEC related projects including Gwadar port.

When asked about the Indian Home Minister Amit Shah recent remarks that Azad Kashmir is part of India, the spokesperson said these are unwarranted and based on fallacy. She said Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized dispute whose final disposition is to be made by the Kashmiri people in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions. She emphasized that

## PTA conducts successful raid in Sahiwal against illegal SIM issuance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Faisalabad, in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted a successful raid against the franchisee of a mobile phone company in Sahiwal against illegal SIM Issuance.

The franchisee was found to be involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs that were also found to be used in grey trafficking and fraudulent activities, said a news release on Thursday.

During the raid, 146 suspicious SIM cards, five BVS devices, and one laptop being used to activate the SIMs illegally were seized.

## Ataullah Tarar for devising ...

Continued from page 1

regarding the expansion of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of media and the establishment of the Pakistan-China Information Corridor to prevent fake news about CPEC.

Pakistan highly valued its relations with China, the minister added that both countries were bound by the eternal bond of friendship.

Ataullah Tarar said in 1998, his grandfather Muhammad Rafiq Tarar received the then Prime Minister of China on his visit to Pakistan as President.

"We have seen Pakistan-China friendship from generation to generation. We have to inform our new generation about our historical and strong friendship," he maintained. "We have to tell the new generation how China and Pakistan supported each other in difficult times," the minister said.

Tarar said that China had supported Pakistan at every international forum including Shanghai Cooperation Organization and United Nations.

He opined that a close and sustainable partnership between the two countries in the form of CPEC was in the wider interest of the

entire region.

The CPEC was an important milestone in promoting the economic development of Pakistan, Tarar remarked.

"The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a framework for regional connectivity that will not only benefit China and Pakistan but will also have positive effects on Iran, Afghanistan, India, Central Asian Republics and the region," the minister said.

He said that the China-Pakistan Information Corridor would be an important strategic step towards preventing fake news about CPEC as it aimed to harness the power of digital connectivity and information exchange.

The Ministry of Information, he added will continue its work in this regard.

He said it was the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to make Pakistan an investor-friendly country. In the meeting, the two countries agreed to expand cooperation in the field of film and culture.

"Like China, Pakistan is an ancient civilization with a history of seven thousand years," Tarar told the Chinese envoy.

He said many spiritual and cultural movements emerged from the Indus

Valley of Pakistan that shaped Asian culture.

The ancient Gandhara civilization of Pakistan introduced Buddhism to much of East Asia, including China, he stated.

He said Pakistan and China also jointly organized a Gandhara Buddhist exhibition at the Palace Museum last year.

In the meeting, discussions were also held regarding the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda between Pakistan and China.

Tarar said that Romina Khurshid Alam was in close contact with China regarding the SDGs project.

The MoU between Pakistan's official news agency Associated Press of Pakistan and China Media Group (CMG) for the third Belt and Road Forum was also discussed in the meeting. The minister said that the MoU between APP and Xinhua News Agency was in progress.

Cooperation for the joint production of a travel documentary between CGTN and PTV was also discussed by the minister and the Chinese Ambassador.



TURBAT: Commissioner Mekran Saeed Ahmed Umrani addressing a meeting with administrative officers and officials of law enforcing agencies of District Kech, Gwadar and Panjgur

## PM vows to tackle economic...

Continued from page 1

ing either in the tribunals or courts that should have been resolved as soon as possible.

The annual power theft is around Rs 400 billion in the country while the combined circular debt of electricity and gas was over Rs 5 trillion, the prime minister added.

As regards the achievements of the interim government under SIFC, the prime minister informed that the caretaker setup, due to its measures against power theft, saved Rs 87 billion. Similarly, strict measures were also taken to curb smuggling besides introducing reforms in the land information system. Besides, it also successfully concluded the privatization process of Heavy Mechanical Complex (HMC).

The prime minister highlighted that annually hundreds of billions of rupees were lost in the State Owned Enterprises as PIA alone owed debt worth of Rs 825 billion. Likewise, he said that the interim government also signed many important agreements with different countries to bring investment in the country including that with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) valuing \$10 billion.

Earlier the Special Apex Committee on Thursday briefed the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) initiative and major contributions made by it towards the investments, privatization and overall economic stabilization of the country.

Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) convened the Special Apex Committee meeting here.

The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and attended by former caretaker prime minister Anwaar Ul Haq Kakar, Chief of the Army Staff, members of outgoing and incoming Federal Cabinet and Provincial Chief Ministers besides high level government officials.

The committee admired the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for envisioning and launching the SIFC in June 2023, which has now moved to its formative phase and evolved progressively under the caretaker government.

The committee underscored the need of continuing a consensual approach under SIFC to navigate the myriad of challenges being faced by the country.

The committee also vowed to ensure continuation of policies and take

tough decisions in the larger interest of the country by setting correct economic priorities.

The former caretaker prime minister congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Cabinet and Chief Ministers on assuming their responsibilities and wished good luck for dealing with economic challenges and transforming Pakistan as one of the top economies of the world.

The Chief of Army Staff reassured the fullest support of Pakistan Armed Forces to speed up the economic initiatives of the present government besides ensuring the provision of safe, secure and conducive environment to nurture country's true economic potential.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that SIFC is the way forward under the challenging times and an iron resolve is needed to serve the country like never before.

He urged the Federal Cabinet to join hands, keep political differences aside, and work as a cohesive team to keep the momentum of economic stability. He also thanked the caretaker government for continuation of larger national economic agenda in a befitting manner.



QUETTA: Technicians are busy in repairing of CCTV cameras to surveillance security check as the security measures high alert to avoid untoward incident, in Quetta.

**TENDER NOTICE**

**TSE-232403382983** Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The Divisional Forest Officer Loralai invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2024 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates

S.No.	Name of work/s	E/Cost
1	Construction of Eco-Tourism Hut at Killi Zangwal Kudezai	3,000,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 2 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of at least 2,100,000 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm. Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure. Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee/Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 01 April, 2024 during office hours on working days. Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 01 April, 2024 till 10:00 AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 11:00 AM. Address: Divisional Forest Officer Loralai. Phone no: 3369288138. Email: ImranMani000138@gmail.com

**DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER LORALAI**

---

**PRQ No.1698/21-3-2024**

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

The Executive Engineer (Buildings) C&W PP&H Department District Loralai invites sealed percentage tender based on composite schedule of rates 2018, G.O.B. amended up-to-date from interested contractors / firms for the work listed below: Earnest Money 4%, Tender Fee Rs.1000/- and Time limit 12 Months

S.No	Name of Work	E/Cost
1	REFORMS OF GOVERNMENT POULTRY FARMS INSTALLATION OF HATCHERY AT DIVISIONAL HEAD QUARTERS (GOVT POULTRY FARM LORALAI) TSE-232403382643	10.178 Million
2	CONSTRUCTION OF DIVISIONAL INFORMATION OFFICE AT TURBAT & LORALAI. TSE-232403384303	17.041 Million

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required for Serial no.01 bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turnover of at least 7,124,733 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm, for Serial no.02 bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turnover of at least 11,929,374 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm. Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure. Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 4% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,000 PKR. Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 04 April, 2024 during office hours on working days. Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 04 April, 2024 till 10:00 AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 11:00 AM. Address: Office of the Executive Engineer (Buildings) C&W PP&H Department District Loralai. Telephone No: 08244 660394. Fax No: 082460394. E-mail Address: secretarycwbalochistan@gmail.com. Bid Validity Period: Ninety (90) Days.

**Executive Engineer-Buildings C&W PP&H Department Loralai**

**PRQ No.1696/21-3-2024**



## PM calls upon nation to become part of government's Green Pakistan initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday called upon the provincial governments, civil society and all the citizens to become partners of the government's quest for Green Pakistan.

"Today is about investing in our future. I urge the nation to synergize their efforts in safeguarding this invaluable resource and ensure its effective stewardship for our next generation," he said in a message on observance of International Day of Forests 2024.

He said Pakistan joined the global community in commemorating the International Day of Forests 2024. "This year's theme 'Forests and Innovations: New solutions for a better world,' highlights the need to harness technological innovations to address the growing threats to our forests."

The prime minister pointed out innovations could help sustainably restoring, protecting, managing, and using the forests in the most efficient manner by hampering risks of deforestation, habitat degradation, and climate change.

He said Pakistan's total area under forest cover was less than 5 percent, and around 1.5 percent of these forests were lost every year which had profound impacts on Pakistan's biodiversity, environment and agriculture.

Being one of the most climate-impacted countries in the world, he said climate change events were becoming more frequent and massively devastating for Pakistan, pointing to the urgent need to conserve our indigenous forests. "This has become critical to our survival as a nation."

"Our government is

embarking on the next phase of our ambitious Green Pakistan Initiative which was first launched by PMLN-led government in 2016 to improve forest cover and concerted efforts were made for conservation of biodiversity in Pakistan," he said adding in its next phase, the Green Pakistan Initiative aims to improve the forest cover, preserve wildlife habitats and help carbon sequestration.

"Given the important role that forests play in the environment, let us resolve to protect and conserve them."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain receiving souvenir from the Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Husein of Kavazovic.



ISLAMABAD: Karakoram-8 (K-8) aircrafts of PAF perform aerobatic maneuvers during a rehearsal ahead of the Pakistan Day parade, in Federal Capital.

## Sherdil's K-8Ps, PAF fighter jets spell bound spectators along expressway amid aerial acrobats

ISLAMABAD (APP): The full dress rehearsal of the Armed Forces for Pakistan Day Parade left numerous spectators spellbound along the Expressway while observing the aerial acrobats of the fighter aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and the Sherdil's K-8P aircraft that painted the sky with multiple colors.

The Shakarparian Parade Ground has become the center of attraction for every commuter entering the federal capital for their daily chores and employment purposes that pause and rest at the roadsides to observe the thundering fighter jets hovering over scenic Parade Ground surrounded by thick green cover.

Absa Alam, a female entrepreneur told APP that she was heading towards her office when she heard the roaring sounds of the JF-17 Thunder. "I can assume that it's the pride of the nation JF-17 thunder because it had the loudest engine sound that deafened everyone's ears. But, I must say that there is an unexplainable motivation

and pleasure to witness the armed forces troops and PAF fighter jets doing aerial acrobats," she said.

Alam said it took a great deal of motivation to join this sacred duty of defending your motherland in khaki as it was a noble yet thrilling and daring task. "I captured many spectacular views of the F-16, J-17 and the team Sherdil of PAF that left the sky painted with different colors during the acrobats," she added.

Nasir Ali, a tourist said he was going to Blue Area for his office work but the roars of fighter jets glued him to the roadside to stay and witness the aerial acrobats. "I found it motivating and energizing as I got goosebumps on my skin. My daughter admires Shaheed PAF fighter pilot Marium Mukhtiar and wants to become a fighter pilot too. I captured a few visuals to show that she would love to watch on my mobile phone," he added.

Tayyab and Muttayab, twin brothers said that they had bunked at their college to see the aerial acrobats. "It is one of

the rare occasions as it will again take place after a year near next Pakistan Day. We loved the Team Sherdil acrobats and other fighter jets. We find every fighter jet one of the best but it's hard to differentiate or identify between any because for us every jet is F-16 or JF-17 Thunder," he added.

The twins also captured visuals and pictures of the aircraft performing aerial acrobats and drills over the Parade Ground and claimed that it would be a great memory for them.

Akram Abbas, an elderly who was standing on the overhead bridge told that he was going to cross the road to catch the Metro Bus but waited to witness the fighter jets. "Every passing aircraft sound warms your blood because it reminds us of our brave sons of the soil who had sacrificed for the defense of our motherland. Our prayers, regards, emotions, and love always remain with every soldier, sailor and pilot who takes up his or her task in the field to protect the country," he added.

## SC seeks details of all restaurants in Margalla Hills National Park

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday sought details from authorities within one month pertaining to the all restaurants working in Margalla Hills National Park.

The top court also sought complete details and original record pertaining to land lease agreement between Monal Restaurant and Directorate of Remount Veterinary and Farms (RVM) within a week.

A three-member bench of the top court presided by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa heard the case pertaining to the lease of Monal Restaurant.

The court stated that the Attorney General of Pakistan has admitted that the agreement of RVM directorate with Capital Development Authority (CDA) was not legal as it was signed without the authorization by the federal

## Provision of quality medicines to be ensured

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Policy Board of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has taken a decisive step towards the provision of quality medicines and eradicating of spurious and falsified drugs.

In a meeting of DRAP Policy Board, the board directed all the pharmaceutical companies to print barcodes on the packaging of all local and imported pharmaceutical and biological

drugs for human use within one month from today.

The board also directed DRAP to closely monitor the compliance and take all the measures including legal actions to ensure the compliance.

This initiative aligns with global practices and standards, emphasizing the importance of robust supply chain management in the pharmaceutical industry.

Further hearing of the case was then adjourned till after the Eid.

## Search and combing operation conducted in Bani Gala Police Station jurisdiction

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police Counter Terrorism Department (CTD)



security of the Islamabad citizens. Following these orders, a search and combing

operation was conducted in different areas of Bani Gala police station jurisdiction, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the search and combing operations are being conducted in different areas of the city, to ensure the safety and

security of the Islamabad citizens.

Following these orders, a search and combing

operation was conducted in different areas of Bani Gala police station jurisdiction, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the search and combing operations are being conducted in different areas of the city, to ensure the safety and

## IFA Ramzan Sweep: Rs 178,000 fine imposed, 350 kg defective material disposed off

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Director of Operations for the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), Dr. Tahira Saddique on Thursday said that the Food Safety Teams had conducted a major operation and imposed fines totaling 178,000 rupees along with disposing of 350 kilograms of defective material.

Talking to APP, she said that a robust initiative by the Islamabad Food Authority was in full swing, aimed at ensuring the safety of food throughout the capital city.

In a recent operation,

conducted at Iftar time, FSTs inspected 72 areas including Main Soha inn, Ghauri Town phase 4C, Ghauri Town phase 5B, F-8/2 Islamabad, G-10 Markaz, G-11 Markaz, Bani Stop, Golra Road, F-13, Islamabad, Khatam e Nabowa Chowk, Golra Road, E-13, Islamabad, Mehar Ali Chowk, Zaman Market, Tuesday Bazaar I-9/4 Islamabad respectively.

During the inspection, Tahira said that the authorities issued 21 warning notices and provided essential instructions to 40 establishments to diligently adhere to safety protocols.

## Export enhancement a top government priority: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiative, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday emphasized that export enhancement was a paramount focus of the government's agenda.

The minister convened a meeting alongside Vice Chancellor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque and his team to chart a course for the economic resurgence of Pakistan.

The meeting held discussions on various economic facets, encompassing strategies to enhance exports, address Circular Debt, address tariff disparities, and assess the state of the stock and capital markets. Furthermore, deliberations centered on the exploration of new markets and the formulation of reform initiatives with clear implementation timelines.

Highlighting the role of female participation in national development, he stressed that development remains elusive until a nation achieves 50% female population participation.

He further noted that

it was government's aspiration to cultivate momentum, driving growth between 7% to 9% by 2047.

In alignment with the need for digital transformation, he underscored the mandatory nature of leading Pakistan towards digitalization, recognizing it as a cornerstone for modernization and efficiency.

The minister directed to expedite submission of recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the 5Es Agenda, underscoring the government's commitment to swift and effective action.

## Court serves show-cause notice to Supdt Adiala Jail

ISLAMABAD (APP): The District and Session Court on Thursday issued a contempt of court show-cause notice to Superintendent Adiala Jail on non-producing PTI founder and Bushra Bibi through video link in their bail cases.

The court also summoned Deputy Superintendent Adiala Jail in personal capacity on March 25.

Additional Sessions Judge Tahir Abbas Sapra heard the bail petitions of PTI founder and his wife in multiple cases.

The court said that the jail officials stated that video link service was out of order due to which the accused couldn't be produced. The court said it had already directed the jail administration to ensure working of the system so that the attendances of the accused could be marked.

## Fire on private land near Shahdara along MHNP extinguished

ISLAMABAD (APP): A fire erupted on a private land in the vicinity of Shahdara area along the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) was extinguished by the locals without any major losses or damages reported in the area.

A media post made rounds on the social micro blogging and networking sites that depicted blazing fire hotspots on the hills created much hue and cry among the public especially environmentalists and nature enthusiasts worried about the flora and fauna of the national park.

The Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) officials confirmed that the fire was not of a serious nature and occurred outside the national park premises on a private land.

## ILO vows to resolve workers' issues on priority

ISLAMABAD (APP): Country Director of International Labor Organization (ILO), Geir T Tonstol on Thursday said that International Labor Organization was engaged to launch various social welfare projects to resolve the issues being faced by the workers of this country. He said that worker's genuine problems would be addressed on priority basis.

He expressed these views while addressing at a special event organized here.

He said that health and safety of workers was the foremost responsibility of every organization to bring change in lifestyle of the common man.

## Recovery of over Rs 190 million: SC accepts review petition of Atta Qasmi, Dar others

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has accepted review petitions of Atta ul Haq Qasmi, Ishaq Dar, Pervaiz Rashid and Fawad Hassan Fawad in the case of recovery of over 190 million rupees from former MD PTV Atta Ul Haq Qasmi and others. The court has maintained no evidence of corruption or nepotism could be found.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa maintained there is no evidence of corruption or nepotism. There are no evidence regarding loss of over Rs 190 million to PTV. The decision for recovering money from Atta ul Haq Qasmi, Pervaiz Rashid, Ishaq Dar and Fawad Hassan Fawad is not correct. The court abolished the ban on appointment of Atta Ul Haq Qasmi as director in future.



ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police Personnel stand alert on the entrance of Hiking Trail 5 as the Trails 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 have been closed for the public from 19th March to 23rd March from 5AM to 5PM due to Parade preparations.

## Educational, housing projects marks new era for Balochistan's mines workers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) Balochistan has launched a series of welfare projects worth Rs 1.8 million to enhance living standards and educational opportunities for mine and industrial registered workers across the region.

An official source told APP, the cornerstone of these projects was the establishment of a Girls High School with Staff Residences in Muslim Bagh, Balochistan, designed to provide quality education to the children of 5,605 mine and industrial workers, symbolizing a substantial leap towards gender inclusivity and educational accessibility in the area.

Constructed over 63,000 square feet and with an investment of Rs.700 Million, the school and residences represent a beacon of hope for the future generation of Balochistan. SAPM Malik stressed ensuring that the project is completed within 24 months. He said that the former government also laid the foundation stone for 100 worker residence quarters in Muslim Bagh. This housing project, covering 5 acres and costing an estimated Rs.900 Million, will provide secure and comfortable homes for 100 families, directly tackling the housing shortage that plagues the workers' community.

## ICP ensuring foolproof security arrangements at High Security Zone

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is using all available resources to ensure the peace and tranquility within the federal capital, a public relations officer said.

He said that the Islamabad Capital Police ensured data registration, identification documents and effective search of citizens entering the high security zone on a regular basis.

During the last week, the Islamabad Capital Po-

lice removed tinted glasses and improper number plates from 1468 vehicles, impounded 121 vehicles without documentation.

Strict directions have been issued to police officers and officials performing their duties at high security zone checkpoints to exercise their duty with full responsibility. The protection of important public and private property and embassies located in the high security zone is of paramount importance.

The police officials were further directed to ensure the data entry of all citizens entering the high security zone.



ISLAMABAD: Faizabad bus stands are deserted owing to Pakistan Day parade rehearsal, passengers suffering in the Federal Capital.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

Friday March 22, 2024

**Gwadar attack**

Yesterday's audacious attack on Gwadar's Port Authority Complex is yet another reminder of the grim trajectory of militancy in the country. Within days of a major terrorist attack in North Waziristan, militants targeted a facility which houses government offices, including those of the security agencies.

The Majeed Brigade, affiliated with the banned Balochistan Liberation Army, claimed responsibility. At least eight terrorists were killed by security forces, while two soldiers were martyred. The ambush shows that far from being neutralised, separatist militants in Balochistan very much remain a threat to the province's security. This is not the first time Gwadar and its environs have been targeted by insurgents. Here, separatism and geopolitics combine in a lethal cocktail, as militants believed to have the support of hostile agencies target Chinese interests in what is supposed to be the jewel in the CPEC crown. The luxury PC hotel witnessed a similar attack in 2019, also carried out by the BLA, with the terrorist group saying it had targeted the facility as it was hosting "Chinese and other foreign investors". Even a Chinese-language institute inside Karachi University was hit in a deadly attack in 2022. Striking Gwadar has immense geopolitical significance, as such attacks are designed to scare away whatever investment and economic activities are being carried out in the coastal city.

A proper investigation must uncover how the attackers were able to strike such an official facility housing LEAs. Even otherwise, Gwadar is said to be under a security blanket, mainly to protect Chinese nationals and others associated with CPEC projects in Balochistan. In fact, several observers have pointed to the 'working relationship' between religiously inspired militant groups such as the TTP, and Baloch separatist outfits, including the BLA. This nexus needs to be broken immediately, or else it will compromise the security situation to a dangerous extent in KP and Balochistan, especially if both sets of militants are getting help from beyond our borders. After the Gwadar attack the Balochistan chief minister said that whoever uses violence "will see no mercy from the state". While that may be so, along with the security dimension, the sociopolitical and economic aspects of the insurgency must also be examined. This paper has long argued that poverty and deprivation in Balochistan need to be addressed if the issue of separatism is to be tackled successfully. Foreign investment is direly required but the fruits of these projects — whether CPEC-related, mining schemes, or others — must reach the people of Balochistan. Furthermore, issues such as enforced disappearances, and miserable health and education indicators cannot be ignored and must be given priority. Unless these contributory factors are addressed in earnest, eradicating separatism will be very difficult, and hostile foreign actors will continue to exploit our internal weaknesses.

**Samia Liaquat  
Ali Khan**

Pakistan's pre-eminent community health outreach programme — the Lady Health Worker (LHW) Programme — has been around for 30 years. As we celebrate this pearl jubilee anniversary, it behoves policymakers to sort through research and evidence collected over time to assess success and failure so as to fix what is broken. Here are some recent statistics on the state of healthcare in this country. According to Unicef data, every year more than 350,000 of the 6.3 million babies born, die in infancy. Six out of every 100 children die in the country before they complete their fifth year. Health ministry demographic surveys show that around 15,000 women die annually while giving birth. Pakistan faces a nutrition emergency with stunting a key cause of concern that affects over 40 per cent of children. The Bureau of Statistics figures place population growth rate at a high 2.4pc with a stagnating contraceptive prevalence rate of 34pc.

Infectious diseases, maternal health and undernutrition comprise around half of the national burden of disease.

The LHW programme was designed to tackle a specific set of issues, which required direct access to women in households. The system of healthcare provision in the 1980s halted at the Basic Health Unit which was failing a majority of rural communities, due to difficulty of access. The programme sought to focus on reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health and included the provision of basic services as well as referring community members to the nearest public health facilities (especially for deliveries and complications). In particular, the programme offered family planning services and facilitated the uptake of contraceptive use, nutrition best practices, and preventive healthcare through both awareness-raising and the provision of certain medicines and products.

The initiative started with 10,000 LHWs, and over time, expanded progressively to the current figure of 85,000 LHWs. While this expansion is a reflection

of the programme's initial successes, it also reflects a measure of inertia in thought leadership and strategy — there were no smartphones in the early 1990s, and today mobile phone ownership is at 90pc in Pakistan (of which around 60pc are smartphones). But there was much that worked. Assessments conducted between 1999-2002 revealed that there were significant improvements in the health status of communities in LHWs catchment areas as compared to communities where no LHWs were present. These included substantive increases in vaccination rates for children, in family planning/contraceptive prevalence rates, improvements in preventive healthcare (nutrition, breastfeeding), lower childhood diarrhoea rates, and higher numbers of deliveries at local facilities.

However, by 2012, the differentials in figures started to peter out, and the impact of LHWs was seen to be stagnating. The 18th Constitutional Amendment came into force and the provinces took over the management of the LHW

cadre, as health became a provincial subject. LHWs themselves, having spent nearly 20 years as an extension of, but never within, the official government employee pool, demanded changes to their status. Their asks: to become permanent government employees with all the usual perks and emoluments, enjoy promotions and a pension on retirement.

These were fair; however, once regularised, experts say that their effectiveness decreased further. There were multiple reasons for this as their initial success made them a panacea for all kinds of other health interventions. The burdens on this cadre increased as they became a part of every government public health campaign — be it polio, tuberculosis, even facilitators for elections. This enhanced burden meant a further erosion of effectiveness.

Today, the LHW programme stands at a crossroads. Policymakers need to undertake an extensive review of the challenges and find new and innovative solutions for a Pakistan that is very dif-

ferent from what it was 30 years ago. We need to have diversified rural and urban healthcare models. Provinces need to support one another to identify what works and where. For example, the LHWs are not a model that works well in Balochistan given the way society and geography intersect. They do better in the other provinces, but may not be so relevant in urban centres.

The creators of the original programme believe that their effectiveness has already been corrupted — first because the idea of LHWs were that they would be young women from the community who would provide a specific set of services to households that they had familiarity with. It was easier for them than for any outsider to enter homes and be trusted enough to talk to the women and children. With the regularisation and retention of LHWs, postings and transfers became the norm, which came at a cost to the community. An older lady may not have the same motivation or energy as one 30 years her junior, nor would her word

**Beyond resilience**

**Kamila Hyat**

Many political commentators classify Pakistani society as an extremely resilient one. We have fought for democracy time after time — unlike nations in the Middle East such as Libya, Egypt and Iraq, and many others around the world which have endured three to four decades of harsh dictatorships.

In Pakistan's case, even though the majority of our seven decades in existence have been spent under autocratic regimes, there has always been a pushback for the return of democracy. Each time, democracy has returned — even if it is, in Pluto's words, a 'warped one'.

Resilience also means that Pakistanis have withstood all kinds of hardships and injustices. There are places that have produced a different kind of resilience and spirit. From these nurseries have arrived people willing to fight to push back the inequities and injustices we see in society everywhere. They are willing to fight against misgovernance which leads to hyperinflation. They are ready to give everything they have to

ensure a labourer does not receive a utility bill which is higher than his/her monthly wage and leaves him/her either without electricity or without food for his children.

These nurseries include student unions, perhaps the most important places where thinking and debate happens and where resilience is created. Students at universities learn not only in their classes but also through debating different ideas and putting them into effect. Even in the US — the country that calls itself the nation at the top of the pyramid of democracy — it is mostly students who have rallied for the people of Palestine.

Unfortunately, these student unions have been banned in our nation since the 1980s. Now we only have on-campus 'groups' such as the Punjab Students Group, the Baloch Students Group, the Pashtun Students Group and others which essentially divide students on ethnic lines instead of uniting them as a nation.

At the same time, we have also lost other unions such as those in the labour sector and on farms even when peasants have fought

back, as they did in Okara, and continue to raise a little hope of victory. There can now no longer be any confidence that people across the country will rise up for any cause which does not directly affect them. Indeed, people have become more inward-looking. The idea of nationhood of national news which has an impact on everyone has somehow been lost.

But at some point, there has to be an end to passive resilience and start of a willingness to fight. This is not a revolutionary idea. It is a matter of survival and a matter of getting some kind of meaningful life for people everywhere in the country. Men such as Manzoor Pashteen and women such as Mahrang Baloch have managed to achieve this to some degree for their people. People from parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan consider them their heroes. We need many more like them. But we also need a central figure who can be a hero for his/her people, and this country at its present moment needs heroes no matter where they come from or what their background is.

We need these people

because citizens are unable to keep up with hyperinflation that has affected almost everyone in the land. A security guard who earns a salary of say Rs15,000 a month simply cannot pay his monthly bills. And, of course, the fact that Rs15,000 is below the minimum wage is something that he does not really know, and others know even less about the fact that they have basic rights which should be protected and should be secured by the state.

The state does little to ensure this, acting only as a mouthpiece for those who truly enjoy power in the country and overlooking the hardships of the people it should be serving. The first task of the heroes of the future must be to put an end to ignorance. People need to know what rights they have and how to exercise them. Today women across the country have little idea about their reproductive rights or other rights they should be enjoying as equal citizens of the state.

The same is true for persons like 'haris', labourers and other low-paid workers who do not realize that they are being wrongfully done with by

authorities, unwilling to address their grievances year after year and decade after decade.

At some point, this resilience and its willingness to fight back against the odds will have to come. After all, for how long will people endure a situation where they have no gas in their houses but are forced to pay bills significantly higher than what they were paying just a few months ago? What will they do when these bills rise even higher, as many believe they will? After all, the country will go into a new agreement with the IMF this month. Unless people fight back, they will keep enduring more hardship and more threats to their wellbeing for years to come.

The question is: who will take this resilience forward? It is popularly believed that a single charismatic figure is required to build any kind of revolution or uprising against injustice. Revolution may be too strong a word in a situation where we are nowhere close to one. But we know that there is immense anger amongst people. In the most recent election, we have seen it among the youth and in their voting patterns. The existence of this rage will at

some point emerge in a more open and direct fashion. Indeed, it should emerge in a more direct fashion.

The fact that people are resilient is not really a quality worth praising. It is rather a factor which holds back the nation and prevents people from speaking up for their rights. It is imperative that they do speak up for their rights and against the injustices poured down upon them for so many decades. Even those who suffer these outrages themselves are unable to overcome the power of the elite which ruled the country and demand rights for those who have been killed, those who have died in a factory accident or those injured in some other way.

We need to think about the feelings that this will cause and the rage this will bring upon families who have struggled hard to educate their children and ensure that they go to universities. If after this stage in life they cannot find jobs, only anger, and with it fear, lies ahead. When this will surface and in what form is something we should be thinking about very hard right now, everywhere in the country. -- Courtesy TheNews

**A Rubik's Cube**

**F.S. Aijazuddin**

If you can recall the Rubik's Cube, you are a child of the 1980s. Its inventor Ernő Rubik (a Hungarian professor of architecture) perfected his brainchild in 1979, intending it for use in his classroom. He explained its genesis: "Space always intrigued me, with its incredibly rich possibilities, space alteration [.] objects' transformation [and] movement in space and in time."

The public took a less lofty interest in his invention. It bought 350 million of them as a game, making it the world's most popular selling toy.

The Rubik's Cube is a ridiculously simple contraption — wooden (later plastic) tiles bored with holes, threaded with elastic bands to hold them together. Its novelty lay in aligning tiles of the same colour on each face of the cube. It has over three billion combinations with only one solution. The fastest anyone has been able to solve it is 3.13 seconds, a record held by Max Park who incidentally suffers from autism.

Had the Rubik's Cube been invented in Pakistan, it would have been designed differently. In our makeshift nation — its wooden faces held together by elastic bands — the aim would have been, not to align similarly coloured tiles, but to return to an originally haphazard configuration.

After months of jiggling by the less than dextrous chief election commissioner, our electoral toy has yielded the same pattern that we saw in August 2023. The PML-N-PPP duo is back in power in Islamabad, the provinces have reverted to their traditional loyalties, and the PTI sans its leader Imran Khan has coiled within itself, wait-

ing to spring again. The country faces the unappetising prospect of a second serving of a stale meal.

Drawing rooms are rife with speculation that a disappointed Nawaz Sharif will return to London, now that the IMF, the Chinese and the Saudi crown prince have anointed his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif. Having ensured that his daughter Maryam is installed as chief minister Punjab, he has stayed to see his sons Hussain and Hassan safely through the judicial carwash which may now restore them to the pink of wealth.

Maryam Nawaz is articulate, feisty, photogenic, and determined in time to occupy the PM's house in Islamabad. There is no reason why not. She is only 50 years old. Her uncle Shehbaz is 23 years older.

She may not like being compared to Benazir Bhutto, but the similarities between them are obvious. Like Benazir, she owes much to being her father's daughter. She too entered politics reluctantly and endured imprisonment for her father's sake. And she brings with her the baggage of a husband who, like a younger Mr Zardari, may succumb to temptation.

Benazir once wrote: "As children we had been taught that no price was too high to pay for our country. But the personal price to our family had been high." For the Bhuttos and the Sharifs, the price has been high: the rewards have been even higher.

Maryam Nawaz has the next five years (or so) to prove Benazir Bhutto's belief that "what is important is that a political party articulates the mood of a generation". Benazir was born in 1953; she belonged to the 1980s. Maryam Nawaz, born in 1973, be-

longs to the new millennial, to a different age group of Pakistanis. They are in their mid-50s — mature, jaded, and cynical. They are tired of being fobbed off with unfulfilled promises.

Will she be able to lure and capture the votes of a younger generation of Pakistanis, 'the youth dividend', the ones who voted for someone behind bars in the last elections?

Her uncle Shehbaz Sharif, ensconced in the foothills of Islamabad, faces grander challenges. He needs to manipulate his Rubik's Cube there to yield another configuration. A loner by temperament, he has to borrow his elder brother's talents as a conciliator to bring some semblance of ragged unity within his government. Some inside it would prefer to watch him steer the ship of state alone through the perilous waters ahead, while they sit strapped secure in their life jackets. Sauve qui peut.

Some may ask why it has taken centuries for women to be elected leaders? The closet misogynist Winston Churchill maintained there was no need for women's suffrage: "Women are well represented by their fathers, brothers and husbands."

Interestingly, the first female elected leader came not from the democratic West but from the disorderly East — Sri Lanka. Following the assassination of PM Solomon Bandaranaike in 1959, his 'weeping widow' Sirimavo succeeded him. She, like Mrs Indira Gandhi and Mrs Margaret Thatcher later, served a number of terms as prime minister.

How did Mrs Bandaranaike manage her male-dominated cabinet? She explained: "Well, I appointed my own ministers." Maryam Nawaz may not be permitted that luxury. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Save soil, save life**

**Nasira Habib**

Soil is our lifeline. It sustains life with a variety of foods, holds and filters water to provide us with clean and safe potable water and maintains ecological balance by storing carbon. But Pakistan has played havoc with its soils. We refused to accept that soil is much more than just a combination of minerals in rock material in the form of sand, silt and clay. We started deep tillage and mono-cropping was preferred over biodiverse fields. Inorganic chemical fertilisers and pesticides replaced natural soil rejuvenating practices and water-intensive seed varieties were imposed on the farmers.

The result was massive destruction of the soil's microbial life, which nature deploys to help plants produce delicious and nutritious food. Bacteria and fungi decompose dead organic matter. Without these decomposers, dead materials will pile up, causing unimaginable pollution and making life impossible. They break down the organic waste and recycle it to process food for plants.

Another group of microbes has taken on the role of mining minerals from the rock material in the soil. They make the organic acids that break down crystalline structures of the rocks into sand, silt and clay.

There is yet another set of microbes that partner with certain plants, colonise their roots and fix nitrogen. These microbes thrive in favourable conditions and grow massively. Their huge populations attract their predators — protozoa, nematodes, and microarthropods that feast on the bacteria and fungi and keep their population under control.

The predators' intake contains more nutrients in their bodies than they need. They excrete the surplus nutrients. The excreted matter, referred to as 'predator poop', contains nutrients that plants need and are in a form that plants can uptake.

As we know, plants make food through photosynthesis and store 20 per cent to 85pc of that energy (depending on the category of plants) in their roots. However, the sugars produced through photosynthesis are not enough and don't fulfil their nutritional requirements. They also need a wide range of minerals to grow, maintain their health, and produce healthy, delicious, and nutrient-dense food. They offer 30pc to 40pc of the photosynthetic food stored in their roots to soil bacteria and fungi to attract them, which fulfils different food requirements of all species of beneficial bacteria and fungi. The microbes respond positively. They are lured to the plant roots and colonise them.

Predator poop contains soluble inorganic nutrients in plant available form. Plants take up the nutrients they require, get great returns on their investment, and grow happily and healthily. Some of these microbes in the soil travel to the above-ground parts of the plant and cover stems, leaves, flowers and fruits. Here too, the exchange between the plants and the microbes takes place.

This is nature's way of nutrient cycling and providing nutrients to the plants.

There are no nutrients that are lacking in the soil. Nutrients are massively more than enough to grow plants. No plants depend on us to add inorganic chemicals to the

soil. However, deep tillage and massive use of agricultural chemicals have resulted in the loss of biodiversity and soil degradation, costing Pakistan's economy over Rs365 billion every year. We are facing gigantic challenges of salinity and sodicity, waterlogging, soil erosion, depletion of soil fertility, imbalance of nutrients, decline in productivity, droughts and desertification. Sixty-two million hectares of Pakistan's land, almost 80pc of the total area, is vulnerable to desertification.

We urgently need to respond to the crisis. The most cost-effective and sustainable solution lies in following nature by bringing life back to the soil. Agroeco-logy is an approach to agriculture that seeks to integrate ecological principles into farming systems, emphasising biodiversity conservation, natural pest control, climate change mitigation and sustainability. Agroecological practices are low-cost, can ensure higher productivity, relieve farmers of the back-breaking costs of chemical agricultural inputs and enable them to build a soil structure with a sponge-like ability to hold water and prevent waterlogging or drought stress. This shift can lead to a sustainable economy and rescue our farmers from the spiral of debt, disease, pollution and food insecurity.

To reap the wide-ranging benefits of agroecology, we need a strong political will that heralds a fundamental policy shift, detailed planning and robust implementation to protect our soils and climate from corporate greed. We must remember nature doesn't need us, we depend on it for our survival. -- Courtesy Dawn



## AJK PM affirms commitment to enhance education standards

MIRPUR (APP): Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq of Azad Jammu and Kashmir reiterates his government's unwavering dedication to prioritizing the delivery of quality education, particularly in the field of medicine, during an important meeting at Jammu Kashmir House.

During an extraordinary session with the governing body of state-run medical colleges on Thursday, the prime minister emphasized the paramount importance of maintaining high educational standards, emphasizing that no compromises will be made in this regard.

Addressing the critical issue of faculty shortages, he assured swift and decisive actions to address this pressing concern.

Highlighting the pivotal role of medical graduates in shaping the nation's future, PM Anwar underscored the government's commitment to providing essential resources to ensure top-notch education for aspiring medical professionals.

The meeting, graced by government ministers and key officials, approved substantial budgets for multiple medical colleges, including Muzaffarabad, Rawalkot, and Mirpur,

with a focus on addressing faculty shortages and other pertinent challenges.

Moreover, the green light was given for the recruitment of new professors and assistant professors, signaling a proactive approach to bolstering the academic faculty in these institutions.

With these decisive measures and unwavering commitment to educational excellence, the prime minister's administration sets a strong precedent for the advancement of education, particularly in the vital field of medicine, in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.



GILGIT: Deputy Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Sadia Danish in a meeting with the Director Banazir Incom Support Programme.

## Azma Bukhari says: Trees vital for ensuring healthy environment

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has said that as water is important for humans in the same way trees are important for ensuring healthy environment.

According to a press release issued here on Thursday, she said that it is a responsibility of every citizen to plant one sapling today to mark World Forest Day in an appropriate way. She said that tree plantation

campaign has been started across the province as per the direction of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

She further said that planting one sapling today would yield positive results in future for coming generations.

Azma Bukhari said, "Air Quality Index of Lahore has already increased to alarming level and planting saplings is the only cheapest way to deal with environmental pollution."

## Donald Lu, Asad Majeed rejected Imran's narrative regarding cipher: Sharjeel

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan People's Party leader and Senior Minister Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon on Thursday said the cipher was a drama, Imran Khan concocted a false narrative regarding the census to protect his political interests, not only Donald Lu but also Asad Majeed rejected the claims of Imran Khan. PTI founder hired lobbyists to save his politics and attempted to distort Pakistan's image.

In a statement, Sharjeel Memon said that the PTI's sloganeering during Donald Lu's speech

made Pakistan a mockery in the eyes of the whole world. The congressman who supports the genocide of innocent Palestinians is also a supporter of Imran Khan.

He stated that the rigging to install Imran Khan on the throne had commenced prior to 2018. The unannounced censorship serves as evidence of the rigging in 2018. There were irregularities in the constituencies during 2018, and European observers acknowledged that the results lacked transparency.

## EC issues notification of election tribunals

LAHORE (Online): Election Commission (EC) has issued notification of election tribunals with reference to by polls in Punjab.

According to notification 4 judges of high court will hear the petitions against the approval or rejection nomination papers in connection with by polls.

As per notification Justice Shahid Karim, Justice Sarfraz Dogar, Justice Ahamd Nadim Arshid and Justice Mirza Waqar Rauf are included in the judges.

## Jinnah House attack: ATC extends interim bail of 10 lawyers

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday extended the interim bail of ten lawyers involved in the Jinnah House attack case until March 25.

The court also sought an investigation report from the police, on the next date of hearing.

ATC Judge Arshad Javed presided over the bail petition proceedings, with the lawyers appearing and marking their attendance.

The advocates - Zameer Ahmad, Gulraiz Iqbal, Ahad Amir,



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information Uzma Bukhari offering Dua after inaugurating plantation campaign by planting a tree at Al-Hamra Arts Council.

## Administrative meeting by Nawaz Sharif LHC seeks documents in petition filed against presiding over Punjab govt

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has sought relevant documents from the counsel of petitioner in the petition filed against the matter of presiding over the administrative meeting of Punjab government by PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif.

The petition filed by citizen Mashkoor Hussain came up for hearing before single bench of LHC led by Justice Muzammil Akhtar Shabbir Thursday.

The counsel for petitioner said Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz jointly presided over meeting in Punjab. Nawaz Sharif holds no public or

administrative office. Therefore, the court should restrain Nawaz Sharif from presiding over meeting at administrative level.

The court remarked you should present official documents related to the meeting. There are no signature of any one in the press release. You should present official documents.

The counsel for the petitioner sought time to present official documents.

The court later accepted the plea of the counsel of the petitioner for adjourning the hearing.

It is pertinent to mention here the act of presiding over administrative meeting of

Punjab government by Nawaz Sharif was challenged in LHC.

The petition was filed through Nadim Sarwar advocate making Nawaz Sharif and Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz respondents through principal secretary. The petitioner took the plea Nawaz Sharif is neither minister nor chief minister and he holds even no administrative post. PML-N Quaid cannot preside over any meeting at administrative level.

The petitioner requested the court Nawaz Sharif be stopped from presiding over administrative meetings.

## Donald Lu has rejected Imran's allegations: Talal

FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former state minister Muhammad Talal Chaudhry has said that the statement of US Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asian Affairs Donald Lu proved beyond any doubt that Imran Khan had leveled fake allegations about the US conspiracy for removal of his government.

Addressing a news conference here on Thursday, he said Pakistan had to face embarrassment in international community because of irresponsible attitude of the PTI founder. He said anti-Pakistan elements sitting abroad were making hue and cry

over the alleged rigging in elections but they had no stakes in Pakistan.

Talal said the government was committed to eliminating terrorism and focusing on economic revival. He said a non-serious person had been elected as the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa chief minister. Such steps would cause a backlash and perpetrators would have to face its consequences, he added. He said that all political parties were ready to discuss and negotiate on the charter of economy, as it was in the best national interest. He said the PTI inside and outside Pakistan was trying to create political instability, but the people of Pakistan.

## ATC grants bail to MPA in Zaman Park torture case

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday granted bail to MPA Hafiz Farhat Abbas of the Sunni Ittehad Council in a case of torturing police officials at Zaman Park, outside the residence of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder.

The court directed the MPA to furnish surety bonds of Rs 100,000 for availing the relief of bail.

ATC Judge Arshad Javed conducted the proceedings on a post-arrest bail petition filed by the MPA. During the proceedings, the petitioner's counsel submitted that his client,

## KP Govt to launch work place-based technical training project: SACM

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is mulling over bringing technical and vocational training in the province at international standard and launching a scheme of work place-based training to the under-training students in industrial and technical sectors to utilize the skilled manpower in domestic and foreign markets.

Pakhtunkhwa for Technical Education and Industries and Commerce, Abdul Karim Tordhirs here on Thursday.

Besides, the Managing Director (MD) TEVTA Amir Afaq and Director Finance Munir Gul, other officials also attended the meeting.

The Special Assistant was briefed regarding the basic outline of the plan of the said proposed project and given details regarding its usefulness and importance.

The model of this training project instead of teaching theory will consist of practical in technical and vocational institutions while the graduated students and skilled workers under the project will also be given a reasonable stipend during their practical training.

In this regard, a meeting regarding Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority was held under the chairmanship of Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber

Speaking in the occasion, the Special Assistant instructed that in order to equip the youth in the province with employment and to take advantage of the abundant opportunities available for manpower in technical and professional fields in the country and abroad, he said equipping youth with market-oriented skills is essential. He said that for this purpose, acquiring a paper degree is not enough.



FAISALABAD: Former State Minister and central leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) Muhammad Talal Chaudhry addressing a press conference.

## Minister inspects Services Hospital's revamp project

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has assured that patients visiting Services Hospital will not encounter any inconveniences during the ongoing revamping process.

During his visit to the hospital on Thursday to oversee the project, Minister Rafique emphasized the timely completion of the renovation work, urging contractors to adhere strictly to deadlines. He underscored the importance of enhancing patient convenience post-revamp and pledged zero tolerance for any lapses in the project's execution. The revamping, conducted

in two shifts, is under close scrutiny to ensure steady progress. Minister Rafique toured various sections of the hospital, including the admin block, surgical ward, and private rooms, to gauge the project's advancement. Earlier briefings by contractors and IDP officers provided insights into the ongoing renovations.

The minister's visit was attended by officials including Additional Secretary Development Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Agha Nabil and MS Services Hospital Dr. Munir Ahmed Malik, signifying concerted efforts to enhance healthcare infrastructure in Punjab.

## Punjab Ombudsman facilitates disbursement of pending grants

BAHAWALNAGAR (APP): Under the directives of Provincial Ombudsman Punjab Major Azam Sulaiman Khan, 36 petitioners have received long-overdue grants totaling 7.2 mln, while 38 deserving students from Lahore were granted educational scholarships amounting to over Rs 1.6 mln.

Notably, these initiatives address the concerns of applicants who had been tirelessly pursuing their entitlements, reflecting the

Ombudsman's commitment to expeditiously resolve such matters.

The proactive intervention led to the disbursement of marriage grants, death grants, and farewell grants to 36 applicants, bringing long-awaited financial support to these individuals. This concerted effort involved various provincial departments, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to addressing the welfare needs of citizens.



KARACHI: People break their fast during Iftar arranged by NGO during holy month of Ramazan at Press Club Chowrangi.

## Sindh Govt decides to draft policy for utilizing Thar's Coal for gasification

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Government has decided to prepare draft policy in relation to make Liquid Gas and Fertilizer from Thar's Coal through which a foreign exchange worth US dollars 500 million could be saved annually.

This was informed at a meeting of Sindh Coal Authority held here at the office of Energy department under the chair of provincial Minister

Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Thursday.

The meeting was informed that sample of the Coal excavated from Thar was checked up from South Asian Laboratory which has declared it fit for utilizing it for gasification. The meeting was told that as a result of gas production from coal, country can save about 500 million dollars in foreign exchange annually.

## Plantation vital for reducing environmental pollution: Kirmani

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said on Thursday that tree plantation campaign was inevitable to reduce environmental pollution.

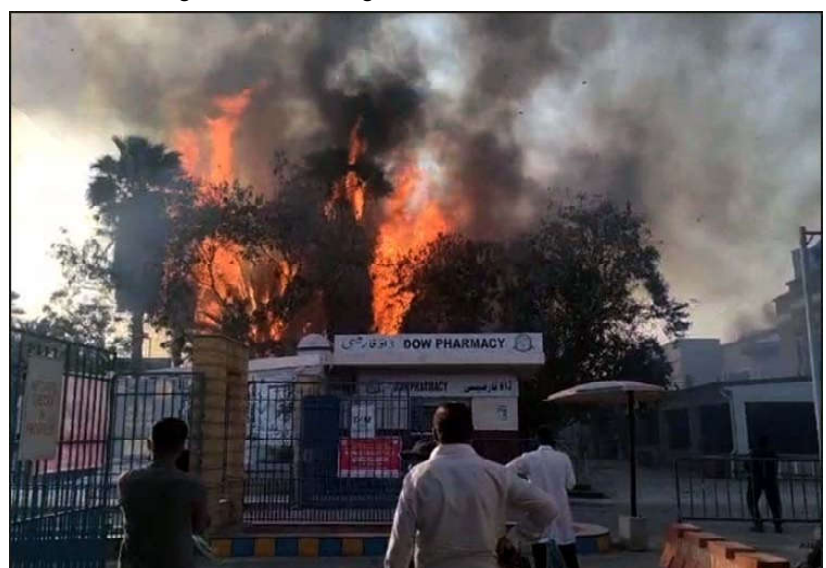
He said this while planting a sapling at Liberty Chowk here. He said that Punjab would be made 'Sarsabz' as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. He said that during current

year, 1.1 million plants would be planted under urban forestation in Lahore.

Syed Ashiq Kirmani also distributed informative material related to different types of plants and tree plantation among the people. He said that it was essential to increase the number of trees to deal with challenges of global warming. He said that the

incumbent government had started tree plantation drive to reduce environmental pollution and entire government machinery was participating in it.

People from different walks of life must participate in this campaign so that coming generations could be provided neat and clean living environment, he added.



KARACHI: View of site after fire eruption at Dow University of Health Sciences Ojha Campus after a fire broken out incident as the fire brigade and rescue officials are busy in extinguishing fire during rescue operation, at Suparco road in Karachi.

## KP Govt initiates work place-based training scheme for technical education

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has embarked on a significant initiative to align technical and vocational education with global standards and to harness the province's skilled workforce through abundant opportunities both within and outside the country.

Under this endeavor, a special scheme of work-based training in industries and technical fields is being introduced for students enrolled in government technical training institutions.

The model of training under this project will include theoretical learning during various phases of programs in technical colleges and vocational institutions across the province, followed by mandatory practical work in relevant fields. Similarly, graduating students and skilled individuals will be provided with reasonable stipends during practical training. In this regard, a meeting was convened

under the leadership of Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Technical Education and Industries, Abdul Karim Tordhirs. The meeting was attended by MD TEVTA Amir Afaq and Director Finance Munir Gul.

During the meeting, the Special Assistant was briefed on the basic framework of the proposed project and provided with details regarding its benefits and significance.

He emphasized the importance of equipping the province's youth with global requirements and skills in order to secure lucrative opportunities in technical and professional fields both domestically and internationally.

He stressed that mere acquisition of paper degrees is not sufficient, but rather practical training in industries and other technical fields is essential.

He directed for immediate action to make the project effective and beneficial from all aspects and to place.

## 5 die in 1,103 road accidents in Punjab

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: At least five persons were killed and 1,162 others injured in 1,103 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 529 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 633 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

Data the analysis showed that 607 drivers, 44 underage drivers, 186 pedestrians, and 374 passengers were among the victims of road crashes. The statistics show that 251 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 277 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by Faisalabad with 88 accidents and 99 victims, and at third Gujranwala with 70 accidents and 64 victims.

According to the data, 990 motorbikes, 49 auto-rickshaws, 105 motorcars, 22 vans, five passenger buses, 17 trucks and 97 other types.

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health Khawaja Sulaiman Rafique being briefed about master plan of Services Hospital revamping project.



## Pakistan, ADB discuss collaboration to foster economic growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Country Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Young Ye, here Thursday called on Minister for Finance & Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb to discuss ongoing collaborations and future initiatives aimed at fostering economic development in Pakistan. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their partnership, with a shared goal of promoting sustainable economic

growth and development in the country, said a press statement issued by finance ministry. Furthermore, the status of ongoing policy-based programs, including the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Program and the Climate and Disaster Resilience Enhancement Program (CDREP) were also discussed. Young Ye, congratulated Minister for Finance and Revenue on staff level agreement with

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and stated that the market has positively responded to the development. During the meeting, Minister Aurangzeb expressed appreciation for the support provided by ADB over the years. He particularly highlighted ADB's assistance through Policy Based Lending (PBL) to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and floods. Acknowledging

ADB's pivotal role in promoting climate-conscious programs across Asia and the Pacific, the Minister emphasized the alignment of ADB's climate operations with Pakistan's own climate goals and commitments. The minister outlined government's priority areas for achieving macro-economic stability and sustainability, including measures to enhance revenue, SOEs reforms, privatization, and public-private partnerships.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb calls on by Country Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Young Ye.



LAHORE: Clara Strandhoj, Head of Lahore Office - British High Commission meeting with Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhary Shafay Hussain.

## Ambassador says: Pak-Belarus bilateral trade reaches \$60 million

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Belarus to Pakistan, Andrei METELITSA, has said that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Belarus currently amounts to \$60 million, but the potential for bilateral trade between the two countries is much greater. The trade turnover between Belarus and Pakistan ranges from \$30 to \$115 million annually, approximately \$60 million on average, according to Andrei METELITSA.

Ambassador of Belarus to Pakistan, METELITSA said this while addressing a gathering of businessmen at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). The event was hosted by ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri, according to a press release issued on Thursday. The Ambassador said that diplomatic, economic, and trade ties between Pakistan and Belarus consist of three decade and diplomatic relations

between the two countries began on February 3, 2024. The Ambassador of Belarus said that Pakistan and Belarus are geographically important countries in South Asia and Eastern Europe, and trade relations between them are being developed. The envoy said that the trade between Pakistan and Belarus is high-value engineering goods, especially tractors and trucks, and along with this, Belarus is also exporting Potassic Fertilizers.

## Over 4.535 mln tons wheat available for local consumption

ISLAMABAD (APP): Research. Talking to APP here on Thursday, he said that out of the total stocks, the carry forward of the grains was recorded at 1.610 million metric tons, whereas the government had procured about 5.998 million metric tons during last year's wheat procurement drive. Meanwhile, the wheat reserves in Punjab province comprised over 2.405 million tons, Sindh has 520,799 metric tons, whereas Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 133,065 metric tons of grains that were enough to meet local consumption of flour and other byproducts during the season, he added.



SIALKOT: Chairman Air Sial Fazal Jilani is addressing the charity iftar dinner of Anjuman Mughalia.

## PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 314 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to a bearish trend on Thursday, losing 314.39 points, a negative change of 0.48 percent, closing at 65,417.40 points against 65,731.79 points the previous trading day. A total of 389,654,899 shares valuing Rs.11,307 billion were traded during the day as compared to 341,843,546 shares valuing Rs.11,844 billion the last day. Some 357 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 115 of them recorded gains and 221 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of

21 remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were PTCL with 52,898,951 shares at Rs.15.84 per share, Pak Int. Bulk with 41,979,500 shares with 6.05 per share and Bank of Punjab with 29,102,209 shares at Rs.5.44 per share. Pakistan Engineering Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.38.16 per share price, closing at Rs.546.99, whereas the runner-up was JDW Sugar Mills Limited with a Rs.31.45 rise in its per share price to Rs.450.75. Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.350.01 per share.

## C&W, Energy and Power to ensure full compliance with sales tax on services

Independent Report

PESHAWAR: Secretaries of Communication and Works Department and Energy and Power Department announced to ensure strict compliance with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services on Thursday. The announcements came during separate meetings of the Director General KPRA and her team with the officials of both departments. The meetings were held at the committee rooms of C&W and Energy and Power under the chairmanship of the departments' respective secretaries.

DG KPRA Miss Fouzia Iqbal gave detailed briefings about the KPRA and its mandate along with giving a short history of the sales tax on services in the province and explaining the agenda points at both the meetings. The DG informed the Secretary C&W Mr. Idrees Khan Marwat and the officials of the department present in the meeting that the exemption to FATA and PATA in the government-funded ADP and PSDP Schemes seized to exist after July 2021, however, it is still given which is wrong and shall be stopped immediately. She informed the participants that due to misclassification of sales tax on goods and sales tax on services, the tax of KPRA is going to FBR that needs to be stopped. She added that there is no data sharing between KPRA and field formations of the C&W due to which there are compliance issues that need attention. Secretary C&W Idrees Khan said that tax is a collective responsibility and everyone has to play his/her part to ensure strict tax compliance for the development of the province. "Our little efforts can make a huge difference. We have to deduct proper taxes and make accurate declarations to stop our money from going to the federal government by mistake," he said directing all the field formations and the officers present at the meeting to ensure tax compliance. It was agreed that KPRA will arrange a training workshop for the Executive Engineers.

## Ambassador vows to expand Pak-Czech diverse cooperation including trade, tourism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan in Czech Republic Ayesha Ali on Thursday expressed her commitment to enhancing bilateral relations with the land-locked Central European country, focusing on political, trade, economic, cultural, and people-to-people interactions. The ambassador, in an interview with 'Czech & Slovak Leaders' magazine, said its strong economic and trade relationship between the

two countries continued to grow. "Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, with a large middle class. Pakistan also has one of the best foreign direct investment regimes in the world, and offers opportunities for investment in all possible sectors, including automotive, machines & tools, mining, agriculture, and IT & energy," she said. Ayesha Ali said as these are also strong performing sectors of the Czech economy, the collaboration possibilities are immense. She said, "We welcome Czech investment, and want to expand our bilateral trade ties beyond the traditional and into new areas for mutual benefit." She told the interviewer that the platform of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) of Pakistan was very important, and that the embassy had been sensitizing the Czech counterparts regarding opportunities offered by the SIFC.

## Rupee gains 01 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Thursday gained 01 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.39 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.40. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.3 and Rs281.05, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.83 to close.



QUETTA: A teenager boy repairing LED bulbs at Joint Road to earn for livelihood.

## Jazz invests Rs. 37b to support growing data demand, strengthen digital ecosystem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Despite a challenging macroeconomic environment, Jazz, Pakistan's leading digital operator, invested Rs. 37 billion in 2023, aimed at supporting Pakistan's growing data demand and strengthening the digital ecosystem in key areas including fintech, cloud services, and data analytics, bringing its overall investment in Pakistan to \$10.6 billion. The digital operator witnessed a remarkable 20 percent year-on-year (YoY) growth in revenues in the local currency; however, Jazz's revenue declined by 12.9 percent in USD terms during the financial year 2023 primarily due to the devaluation of the Pakistani Rupee (PKR). Additionally, margins felt the impact of an unprecedented surge in business costs, amid record high interest rates and a substantial rise in network energy costs. The majority of its capital expenditure during the year was directed towards adding nearly 1,000 new 4G sites, showcasing the company's commitment to ensuring a consistent improvement in service quality for its customers. This network expansion played a pivotal role in increasing Jazz's 4G customer base to 43.9 million, while its overall subscriber base reached 70.6 million, as of Dec 2023. Moreover, with over 22 million Voice over LTE (VoLTE) daily active customers, Jazz has emerged as the largest VoLTE network in the region.



HYDERABAD: Workers sorting and packing bangles at their workplace in Bangles Market.

## Shahid Rasheed says: Govt's staff level agreement with IMF a great success

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt has termed the staff level agreement with IMF as a great success and achievement. In a statement issued here on Thursday, he said that the deal will infuse confidence in the business community and contribute to the better rating for Pakistan. Shahid Rasheed Butt also lauded the decision of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to maintain the interest rate at 22 percent. The economic situation was improving, and inflation was likely to drop to 20 percent next month, he said adding the Monetary Policy Committee of the State Bank may consider reducing interest rates in its next meeting. The business leader said that a lower interest rate at this stage would have increased inflation while the rupee value would have decreased. This would have increased imports, further depleting the foreign exchange reserves. Presently, the forex reserves are around thirteen billion dollars, barely covering two months' imports.



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari presenting shield to Ambassador of Belarus Andrei METELITSA.

## Ethiopian Airlines getting overwhelming response in Pakistan: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ethiopian Airlines in Karachi. "The Ethiopian Airlines in Pakistan is getting an overwhelming response and now we are working towards expansion of its operations to Islamabad and Lahore as well," the Ambassador noted. He said steps were being taken to boost people-to-people and business-to-business relation between the two countries. "In the last one and half years, we have taken over 75-member business delegation to Ethiopia and facilitated arrival of 50-member trade delegation from Ethiopia in Pakistan," he said, adding the mainstay of the Ethiopian Embassy's endeavours was economic diplomacy that would ultimately connect the people of two countries at grassroots level. He also announced to take another trade delegation to Ethiopia this year in May.

Upon his arrival at the ICCI, the ambassador was accorded warm welcome by the Islamabad Chamber's President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and other office bearers of the chamber. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest including the needful initiatives for fostering business and trade connections between the two countries. On the occasion, the Ambassador highlighted the critical role being played by Ethiopia in "Look Africa and Engage Africa" policy by starting the Ethiopian Airlines



SARGODHA: Women buying clothes from the stalls in Urdu Bazaar.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Kinloss, Maersk Cabo Verde, Trans Spring and Gaschem Leda, carrying Container, Steel coil and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Wednesday. Meanwhile four more ships, Solar Roma, Sky Runner, PGC Patreas and Southern Anoa carrying Palm oil, LPG and Chemicals also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours. A total of eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Maersk Cabo Verde, Kano and Uog Sparta left the Port on today morning while three more ships, Gaschem Leda, Maersk Kinloss and Beteleur are expected to sail on today afternoon.

## Gold rates up by Rs.4,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.4,600 and was sold at Rs.232,400 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs.227,800 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.3,943 to Rs.199,245 from Rs.195,302 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.182,642 from Rs.179,027.



# Suicide bombing in Afghanistan's Kandahar city kills 21

**Monitoring Desk**  
KANDAHAR: A suicide bombing killed at least 21 people and wounded several others on Thursday in the Afghan city of Kandahar, a provincial official said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, and while multiple explosions have been reported around the country since the start of the holy month of Ramazan on March 11, few have been confirmed by Taliban officials.

Afghanistan's capital is Kabul but Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada lives in Kandahar city, for decades the stronghold of the Taliban movement.

A British media outlet reported nearly two dozen people were killed citing a doctor at the regional hospital; however, the government said that three people had died, while numerous others were wounded.

The explosion at around 8:00 am (0330 GMT) targeted a group of people waiting outside the New Kabul Bank branch in central Kandahar city.

"Commonly our compatriots gather there to collect their salaries," Samangani said, adding that the "victims were civilians."



An Afghan security personnel checks a vehicle near the site of a suicide bomb attack in Kandahar.

However, an AFP journalist saw what appeared to be unconscious people or dead bodies being loaded into ambulances in the wake of the blast.

Firefighters and security personnel were clearing the area, where blood, scraps of clothes and shoes littered the ground.

## Irish PM resigns, says he isn't 'best person' to lead nation

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBLIN: Leo Varadkar on Wednesday announced that he was stepping down as Ireland's prime minister and leader of the Fine Gael party in the governing coalition, citing "personal and political" reasons.

and at 45 remains one of Europe's youngest leaders, said he felt he was no longer the "best person" to lead the country.

Pundits called the surprise move, just 10 weeks before Ireland holds European Parliament and local elections, a "political earthquake".

"Politicians are human beings. We have our limitations," he said in a statement on the steps of Government Buildings in Dublin, surrounded by his Fine Gael cabinet colleagues.

Deputy Prime Minister Micheal Martin, leader of Fianna Fail, the main coalition partner, said Varadkar's announcement was "unexpected" but added that he expected the government to run its full term.

"We give it everything until we can't anymore and then we have to move on." Despite poor showings at the ballot box, Varadkar insisted that he believed the government could be re-elected. But he added: "I believe a new taoiseach (prime minister) will be better placed than me to achieve that — to renew and strengthen the top team, to refocus our message and policies, and to drive implementation."

## India's Congress party accuses Modi of 'crippling' it ahead of elections with tax case

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: India's main opposition Congress party accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday of crippling it before the upcoming general election by freezing its accounts in an income tax case.

the elections," Gandhi said at a press conference.

A part of the Congress' bank accounts was frozen last month pending a tax case that dates back to 2018-19, the party has said previously.

General elections are scheduled to be held in seven phases starting next month, with most opinion polls predicting an easy win for Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Congress, which leads a rag-tag bunch of bickering opposition parties in alliance for the general elections, is seen as Modi's main challenger.



India's Congress party president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi address a press conference at the Congress party headquarters in New Delhi, India.

"We can do no campaign work. Our leaders cannot fly from one part of the country to the other. Forget about flying, they cannot even buy a rail ticket," Gandhi said about the tax case, which he said had caused all the party's bank accounts to be frozen.

## Vietnam's vice president becomes interim president

**Monitoring Desk**  
HANOI: Vietnam's Vice President Vo Thi Anh Xuan will serve as acting president after the previous president's resignation a year into the position, a Communist Party newspaper reported Thursday.

Analysts said a permanent candidate was unlikely to be selected soon, underscoring the growing concerns among foreign investors about political instability in the Southeast Asian nation that is a growing manufacturing hub and sits at the middle of the U.S.-China competition for global influence.

Xuan, 54, became vice president in 2021 and she will be serving as acting president for the second time, the Tuoi Tre daily reported. On Wednesday, President Vo Van Thung resigned due to unspecified violations that hurt the perception and reputation of the party and the state.

## Australia tightens student visa rules as migration hits record high

**Monitoring Desk**  
PERTH (INP): Australia will begin enforcing tougher visa rules for foreign students this week as official data showed migration hit another record high, which is likely to further exacerbate an already tight rental market.

From Saturday, English language requirements for student and graduate visas will be increased, while the government will get the power to suspend education providers from recruiting international students if they repeatedly break rules.



Secretary of State for Defence of the United Kingdom Grant Shapps and Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles exchange Defence Treaty documents during a meeting at Parliament House in Canberra.

## Senate Democrats urge 'bold' US push on Palestinian state

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: More than a third of the US Senate's Democrats called on President Joe Biden's administration on Wednesday to take "bold" action towards establishing a Palestinian state, in the latest pushback against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

criticising Netanyahu's conduct of the Gaza war and urging new Israeli elections. Nineteen Democratic senators led by Tom Carper, a longtime ally of Biden from his home state of Delaware, in the letter said that the Middle East crisis had "reached an inflection point" that required US leadership beyond past "facilitation" of Israeli-Palestinian talks.

The letter to Biden comes days after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the country's highest-ranking Jewish elected leader and long-time advocate for Israel, sent shock waves with a speech

criticising Netanyahu's conduct of the Gaza war and urging new Israeli elections. Nineteen Democratic senators led by Tom Carper, a longtime ally of Biden from his home state of Delaware, in the letter said that the Middle East crisis had "reached an inflection point" that required US leadership beyond past "facilitation" of Israeli-Palestinian talks.

## Russia launches largest missile attack on Kyiv in weeks

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Russia staged its largest missile attack in weeks on Kyiv and the surrounding region on Thursday, injuring at least 17 people and damaging schools, residential buildings and industrial facilities, officials said.

City and regional officials said at least 13 people were injured in different parts of Kyiv and four more in the surrounding region. An 11-year-old girl was among four people taken to hospital, city officials said.

The air force said its defences shot down all the inbound missiles that were fired after a 44-day pause in such attacks on the Ukrainian capital. The damage appeared to have been caused by falling de-

bris. "Every day and every night there is such terror. The world's unity can stop it when it helps us with air defence systems. Now we need this defence here in Ukraine," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app.



Olegii Baranovskiy of the Freedom of Russia Legion, Kholod of the Siberian Battalion and Denis 'White Rex' Kapustin of the Russian Volunteer Corps attend a press conference of pro-Ukrainian Russian paramilitary groups in Kyiv amid Russia's attack on Ukraine.

## Somali pirates return, adding to global shipping crisis

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOGADISHU: As a speed boat carrying more than a dozen Somali pirates bore down on their position in the western Indian Ocean, the crew of a Bangladeshi-owned bulk carrier sent out a distress signal and called an emergency hotline.

so far," Khan said in the message, recorded before the pirates took the crew's phones. The company shared the recording with Reuters.

No one reached them in time. The pirates clambered aboard the Abdullah, firing warning shots and taking the captain and second officer hostage, Chief Officer Atiq Ullah Khan said in an audio message to the ship's owners.

A week later, the Abdullah is anchored off the coast of Somalia, the latest victim of a resurgence of piracy that international navies thought they had brought under control.

## Japan's space agency says it hopes to forge a profitable launch business with its new H3 rocket

**Monitoring Desk**  
TOBISHIMA: Japan's space agency and its prime contractor said Thursday they hope to be able to forge a profitable launch business with their new H3 rocket after its first successful flight last month in an increasingly competitive market dominated by SpaceX.

a 98% success rate but its high launch cost made it less competitive in the global market.

Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries have been developing the H3 as a successor to the soon-to-retire current mainstay H-2A, which enjoyed

"Today, the commercial market has a big demand for rockets, and there is a substantial shortage of rockets," he said, standing next to the rocket's second stage at a news conference.

## UK and Australia sign new defence pact

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: The United Kingdom and Australia inked a new defence agreement in Canberra on Thursday, as they try to boost a fledgling nuclear-powered submarine programme with the United States.

dom and Australia didn't already have a defence co-operation treaty in place," Shapps said after the signing ceremony.

UK defence minister Grant Shapps signed the agreement in Canberra with his counterpart Richard Marles, establishing a legal framework that makes it easier to host troops and share military intelligence.

Alongside the United States, Australia and the UK are members of the fledgling AUKUS defence alliance — a landmark pact aimed at curbing Chinese military expansion in the Asia-Pacific.

The agreement stops short of a full mutual defence pact, which would bind one side to intervene if the other was attacked.

Alongside the United States, Australia and the UK are members of the fledgling AUKUS defence alliance — a landmark pact aimed at curbing Chinese military expansion in the Asia-Pacific.

But it does include a "commitment to consult" about emerging threats and establishes a "status of forces agreement", which makes it easier to host soldiers from the other nation.

Thursday's agreement gave the stalling AUKUS plan some much-needed momentum. "If there was a Trump administration at end of year, and for whatever reason they were not interested in pursuing the agreement, or not in the same way it is envisioned now."

## Saudi Arabia donates \$40 million to UNRWA

**Monitoring Desk**  
RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced on Wednesday it will donate \$40 million to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, which has faced massive funding cuts and calls for its abolition spearheaded by Israel.

although the United Nations has said that Israel has not provided it with any evidence for the allegations.

The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief) said the funds would support UNRWA's "humanitarian relief efforts in the Gaza Strip", where the crisis has raged for more than five months.

UNRWA employs around 30,000 people in the occupied Palestinian territories — including 13,000 in Gaza — as well as neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The UN agency, created in 1949, has come under heavy scrutiny after Israel accused about a dozen of its employees of involvement in the October 7 Hamas raid on southern Israel.

UN and other humanitarian missions, said last month that he believed Israel's aim was "destroying UNRWA", long at the forefront of relief efforts and education in Gaza.

Multiple countries have suspended their aid,

## Indonesian rescue at sea of Rohingya refugees is a reminder of an ordeal that began in Myanmar

**Monitoring Desk**  
BANGKOK: A dramatic story of survival and rescue off the western coast of Indonesia's Aceh province has put the spotlight again on the plight of ethnic Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar who make extremely dangerous voyages across the Indian Ocean to seek better lives.

lim Rohingya ethnic minority have long been considered by Myanmar's Buddhist majority to be illegal settlers from Bangladesh, even though many of their families lived in Myanmar for generations. Aside from social discrimination, nearly all have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless, and have been denied freedom of movement and other basic rights.

Desperate survivors were pulled to safety from their capsized boat by local fishermen on Thursday, after a yet-unknown number perished.

In August 2017, Myanmar's military launched what it called a clearance campaign in northern Rakhine State in response to attacks by a shadowy Rohingya insurgent group.

For Rohingya refugees living in squalid refugee camps in Bangladesh, escaping across the seas might seem like a good option — but it's often a deadly one. The U.N. estimates that as many as one in eight people die or disappear in the attempt.

counterinsurgency action forced about 740,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring Bangladesh and led to accusations that security forces committed mass rapes, killings and burned thousands of homes. International courts are now considering whether the campaign amounted to genocide.

Members of the Mus-

## Independent candidate could put Trump in White House: experts

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW YORK: Democrats and Republicans dominate the US two-party political system, but independent candidates like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other third-party challengers could have a major impact in this year's presidential election.

portant battleground states are Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and North Carolina. In the 2020 election, Biden won all these states except North Carolina; they were all decided by less than 3pc of the vote.

This news agency spoke to a dozen strategists who are gaming out how a third-party candidate could land in the unusual US electoral college system.

Kennedy is running on a platform of limiting US intervention in foreign conflicts, cheaper housing and reining in corporate power, and has positioned himself as an outsider alternative to Biden and Trump. He has the support of 15pc of registered voters, a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll shows.

Early scenarios show a third-party candidate is likely to take more votes from President Joe Biden, a Democrat, than Republican former president Donald Trump. Even narrow margins could make a difference in a handful of battleground states that are decided by a thin sliver of votes and could go Democrat or Republican.

Even a fraction of that support could be meaningful in the battleground states, which allocate all their electoral votes to the candidate who gets the most individual votes. Strategists are zeroing in on Pennsylvania, which has 19 electoral votes, and where Biden won with just 50pc of overall votes in 2020 versus Trump's 48.8pc.

Those states are crucial in amassing the 270 electoral college votes needed for victory.

November's most im-

## Finland is world's happiest country for seventh straight year

**Monitoring Desk**  
HELSINKI: Finland remained the world's happiest country for a seventh straight year in an annual UN sponsored World Happiness Report published on Wednesday.

And Nordic countries kept their places among the 10 most cheerful, with Denmark, Iceland and Sweden trailing Finland.

Afghanistan, plagued by a humanitarian catastrophe since the Taliban regained control in 2020, stayed at the bottom of the 143 countries surveyed. For the first time since the report was published more than a decade ago.

## Minorities' persecution in India: Over 150 attacks on Christians in 2024 so far

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI (INP): The United Christian Forum (UCF), a Delhi-based civil society organisation focused on Christian issues, has said that the first 2.5 months of 2024 have witnessed a large-scale erosion of basic fundamental rights and protection of Indian Christians.

The UCF in a statement in Delhi said, "January witnessed 70 incidents of violence against Christians followed by 62 incidents in 29 days of February and 29 incidents in 15 days of March, 2024."

Today, the commercial market has a big demand for rockets, and there is a substantial shortage of rockets," he said, standing next to the rocket's second stage at a news conference.



## Pakistan, Turkiye agree to increase bilateral trade to \$5billion

BRUSSELS (APP): Pakistan and Turkiye have reaffirmed the resolve to utilize the optimum potential of their bilateral trade and increase it to five billion dollars.

The commitment was expressed during meeting between Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Turkish counterpart Fidan Hakan on the margins of Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels today.

The two sides also vowed to further enhance cooperation in defence, strategic and civil aviation sectors.

Ishaq Dar reiterated

Pakistan's readiness to share experience and expertise in nuclear energy and applications.

He appreciated Turkiye's principled stance on Kashmir dispute and its unflinching support for the oppressed people of Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Deliberating upon the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the two foreign ministers also reaffirmed unflinching support to the people of Palestine. Ishaq Dar extended invitation to his Turkish counterpart to visit Pakistan which he gladly accepted.

The Turkish Foreign Minister conveyed felicitations on behalf of the President of Turkiye to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on successful elections.

He highlighted that the two countries have immense potential given their strategic and geographic locations and underlined the importance of synchronizing their actions and policies for cooperation at global and regional level.

The two Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the upwards trajectory of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Turkiye.



BRUSSELS: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye Hakan Fidan on the sidelines of Nuclear Energy Summit 2024 in Brussels.

## Ambassador Hashmi says China-Pakistan relationship remains source of peace, stability in region and beyond

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan takes "immense pride" in its unique and "time-tested friendship" with China.

The two countries are not only connected by land, rivers, and mountains, but also by a heart corridor, founded on the shared values of mutual respect, trust, solidarity, and support, said Pakistani Ambassador to China Khalil-ur-Rahman Hashmi.

Hashmi also stressed that as Ambassador of Pakistan to China, he and his team are committed to "implementing the consensus reached between the two countries' leadership to fortify the strategic trust between the two countries, strengthen ties across multiple domains, and build an even stronger China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the New Era.

The Pakistani diplomat made the remarks during an event to celebrate the 84th National Day of Pakistan hosted by the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong was also present at the event.

"China and Pakistan are good neighbors, good friends, good partners, and good brothers. The ironclad friendship between the two countries, deeply rooted in the hearts of the two peoples, remains rock solid and keeps growing from strength to strength," Sun said.

"China is glad to see that Pakistan's general election was smoothly held, and a new government has been formed. We sincerely hope that Pakistan will enjoy social stability and economic growth and open up a new prospect for national development," he noted.

According to Hashmi, Pakistan and China and the peoples of the two countries have overcome hardships and celebrated triumphs, standing shoulder to shoulder in good and difficult times, in the true spirit of the iron brotherhood.

"Our relationship remains a source of peace and stability in the region and beyond. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a crown jewel of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), stands as a shining testament of win-win cooperation," he said.

"China and Pakistan are good neighbors, good friends, good partners, and good brothers. The ironclad friendship between the two countries, deeply rooted in the hearts of the two peoples, remains rock solid and keeps growing from strength to strength," Sun said.

## PM, Interior Minister discuss matters related to security, PCB

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday held meeting with Federal Minister for Interior, Anti-Narcotics and Chairperson Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to ministries of Interior, Anti-Narcotics, national security and Pakistan Cricket Board.

The minister informed the prime minister about the task given to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for stopping theft of electricity in the country.

He also briefed the prime minister about the proposed reforms and restructuring plan of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and National Counter Terrorism Authority.

The PM said strict action should be taken against the power thieves and no leniency should be shown to them.

They also discussed the overall political situation in the country.

He also briefed the prime minister about the proposed reforms and restructuring plan of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and National Counter Terrorism Authority.

The PM said strict action should be taken against the power thieves and no leniency should be shown to them.

They also discussed the overall political situation in the country.

## Magnitude 4.2 earthquake hits Khuzdar, adjoining areas

KHUZDAR (INP): An earthquake of magnitude 4.2 jolted Balochistan's Khuzdar district on Wednesday night, Thursday early morning.

According to the seismological center, the depth of the earthquake was 45 kilometers, while the epicenter was 72 kilometers in the northeast.

People came out of their houses in fear by reciting Kalma-e-Tayyaba. However, no loss of life or damage to property was reported from any part of Khuzdar so far.

Yesterday, an earthquake of magnitude 5.4 jolted Southern and Northern parts of Balochistan early morning.

## Maryam Nawaz became CM Punjab through electoral fraud: Gandapur

DI KHAN (INP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur has issued a warning, stating that he is giving a final ultimatum for the federal and Punjab governments to resign.

In a video statement, the Chief Minister's aide, Ali Amin Gandapur, said that if they do not step down voluntarily, he would like to see how they can continue to govern.

Ali Amin Gandapur further stated that Maryam Nawaz became Chief Minister through electoral fraud.

## Roundtable with Blome discusses Pak-US relations in regional, global context

ISLAMABAD (INP): A Roundtable with Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan, Donald Blome on "Pakistan-U.S. Relations in the Context of Regional and Global Developments" was hosted by the Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) here Thursday.

Former Ambassadors and diplomats, heads of think tanks, academics, practitioners, and area experts participated in the roundtable, said a news release.

The DG ISSI emphasized the importance of revitalizing the relationship, with due imagination and ambition about the future prospects.

In his remarks, Ambassador Blome highlighted the importance of establishing robust ties to strengthen the relationship even further. He emphasized that economic development is the cornerstone of Pakistan-US relations with a renewed focus on groundwork to bolster ties and collaborate effectively towards fostering enhanced peace, prosperity, and regional stability. Following the talk, the participants engaged in an interactive discussion that focused on a range of subjects — including the situation in Afghanistan; peace, security and strategic stability.

Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood in his welcome remarks recalled the past patterns of the relationship and dilated on its current dynamics. He noted that the Pakistan-U.S. relationship has been largely influenced by external circumstances, encompassing regional and global developments. The thrust of bilateral cooperation has now shifted from security to a wider range of areas, reflecting changing priorities. While counter-terrorism re-

forms a source of peace and stability in the region and beyond. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a crown jewel of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), stands as a shining testament of win-win cooperation," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior, Narcotics Control and Chairperson Pakistan Cricket Board Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## WMFP stands in solidarity with journalists in Gaza

ISLAMABAD: Thirteen women journalists have been killed while covering the war in Gaza since October 7, 2023. The media fraternity has been horrified by the high toll in Gaza - more than 95 have been killed.

IFJ's Women Media Forum, Pakistan (WMFP) strongly condemns the killings of their colleagues in Gaza. WMFP stands in solidarity with the courageous journalists and media workers who continue to do their work despite threats to their lives. WMFP salutes their colleagues for continuing to do the right thing by Gaza and reporting facts. Such attacks on media while covering a conflict zone make it difficult for the facts to

come out but the media in Gaza has proved itself and protected media freedom and freedom of speech in the region literally in the face of death.

WMFP said in its statement, "Journalists and media personnel are generally vulnerable in peace but the threat increasing magnificently in a conflict zone. It takes immense courage and a sense of duty to continue to work in a conflict zone like Gaza.

The world has seen these brave people continue to work in active conflict zones despite losing colleagues and sustaining personal losses. WMFP stands in solidarity with the women and men of the media who continue to report facts from Gaza at the cost of their lives."



QUETTA: Young Doctor Association (YDA) President, Dr. Kaleemullah addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

## Pakistan coast guards seize hidden weapons

GWADAR (INP): Pakistan Coast Guards have unearthed a cache of concealed weapons and vehicles in Gwadar. According to a spokesman on Thursday, acting on intelligence from confidential sources, Pakistan Coast Guards launched a search operation in the Sarbandar area of Gwadar. During the operation, 36 Glock pistols hidden in two sacks were seized from the possession of a suspect. Further searches of nearby

residences led to the discovery of two motorcycles, two cars, and a double-barreled shotgun. Six individuals suspected of involvement in arms smuggling were apprehended during the operation. Following the seizure of weapons, vehicles, and suspects, Pakistan Coast Guards initiated legal proceedings. In addition to this operation, Pakistan Coast Guards conducted an anti-trawling operation in the sea near Jiwani.

## Customs Intelligence seizes huge quantity of betel nuts from Quetta suburb

QUETTA: The Customs Intelligence foiled a major attempt of smuggling of huge quantity of betel nuts from Quetta on Thursday.

According to the acting Director Customs Intelligence, Dr. Noman, around 15 tons of betel nuts were recovered from two vehicles from Hazar Ganji area in Quetta suburb.

The betel nuts were to be smuggled through passenger coaches to the interior parts of country, the

Customs Intelligence official informed.

According to him, the total worth of seized betel nuts is stated to be around Rs. 40 million.

The necessary investigation has been started after recovering the betel nuts. The vehicles have also been impounded, the Customs Intelligence official added. He said that the Customs Intelligence is committed to wipe out menace of smuggling from the country.



QUETTA: Secretary Forest Abdul Raouf Baloch and Pro Vice-Chancellor Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University Prof. Dr Naheed Haq leading a walk organized on occasion of International Forest Day.

## All ought to contribute in environment protection: Forests play important role in economic development & prosperity: Secretary

Independent Report QUETTA: The Secretary Forests, Abdul Rauf Baloch has underlined the need to create awareness among general public about the importance of forests, which are very important for addressing the issue of environmental pollution.

He was addressing at the ceremony organized to mark the celebration of World Forests' Day in the Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University (SBKWU) here on Thursday.

Also present on the occasion were the Pro-Vice Chancellor of SBKWU, Professor Dr. Naheed Hasan, Deputy Conservator Forests, Muhammad Fawad, Community Development Specialist, Jalil

Agha, Saeed Achakzai, Irfan kasi and others.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Forests said that the World Forests' Day is being celebrated under the theme of climate change this year.

He said that everything in our life directly or indirectly relates with the forests. He said that the water we drink, take medicines, enjoy meal, inhale oxygen, every thing comes from forests, even our residences also relate with the forests, he added.

He said that the economic development and prosperity of the province also based on the forests to some extent while on the other hand, these (forests) also play crucial role in decreasing environmental pollution.

The Secretary Forests on the occasion also stressed the need to plant maximum trees in the tree plantation campaign, which is continued all over the province.

Other speakers also stressed that general public should also play their wholehearted role in tree plantation along with the government, in order to maintain proportion of the forests in the province.

They also pleaded to make the protection and preservation of forests and wildlife and protection of environment part of the academic syllabus.

Meanwhile, awareness walk was also organized by the Forests and Wildlife Department marking the Forests Day.

## Educated women are important need of hour: Nasreen Kakar

Independent Report QUETTA: The Advocate Nasreen Kakar has stated that the educated women are important need of hour.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, Nasreen Kakar said that education is as necessary for human being as oxygen for the life.

She said that human being are like animals as this is education which bless them with wisdom and consciousness.

It is education which guides the human being towards the right path, she

maintained.

The ambitious lawyer said that almost everyone is well aware of the importance of education.

She said that the role of women is equally important in country's development in present developed era.

She also said that the role being played by women can't be denied as they are rendering invaluable services in different sectors.

She said that no society can progress without education.

## Water supply reference: Zardari seeks presidential immunity

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Asif Ali Zardari has sought presidential immunity in Thatta Water Supply Reference in Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad.

A petition seeking presidential immunity has been filed by President Asif Ali Zardari.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana of AC Islamabad heard the case Thursday.

Arshid Tabrez counsel for President Asif Ali Zardari appeared in the court.

Counsel Arshid Tabrez took the plea that Asif Ali Zardari enjoys presidential immunity. The proceedings of the case against Asif Ali Zardari cannot be moved ahead.

The court while issuing notice to NAB adjourned the hearing of the case till April 22.

The other accused are former secretary Ijaz Ahmad Khan, Ali Akbar, Ijaz Memon, Ali Akbar Abro, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Majid, Manahal Majid, Abdul Nadim Bhutto and others.



QUETTA: Amir JUI Balochistan Maulana Abdul Wasey meeting with central leader of BNP (Awami) Mir Asadullah Baloch.

## GoB urged to take steps for preserving forests

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan government was urged to make concentrated efforts for the preservation of forests and tree cover in the province. Members of the Civil Society stressed that prompt and practical measures were needed to be adopted by the provincial government to protect the exotic species and keep the environment green.

The illegal cutting of centuries-old trees in various parts of Balochistan is damaging the eco-system and requires the urgent attention of the quarters concerned to stop this environmentally damaging practice, Aziz Ullah an environmentalist said. During the winter season in Balochistan, locals cut down centuries-old trees for firewood including Juniper, Palos, Olive trees.

under the Balochistan Health Card. Abdullah Khan, on the occasion, said that BAMHH is unique among the private hospitals of Quetta city where patients receive the best health facilities under the supervision of qualified doctors and the best medical equipment and facilities in place. Earlier, the health secretary also approved the establishment of the EPI Statistical Center in Balochistan Askari Mall Healthcare Hospital.

## Secretary opens free health facility under health card

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Health Balochistan Abdullah Khan opened health facility to needy patients under Balochistan Health Card at Balochistan Askari Mall Healthcare Hospital (BAMHH).

Chief Executive Officer BAMHH Khalid Hussain, Focal person Balochistan Health Card Asadullah Kakar, Provincial President Pakistan Medical Association Balochistan Dr. Aftab

Kakar, Manager M&E Balochistan Health Card Dr. Maria Tareen. Prof. Ayesha, Prof. Maryam Shoab and Dr. Faisal Kakar Focal Person BINUQ were also present on this occasion. Secretary Health Abdullah Khan inspected the various departments of Balochistan Askari Mall Health Care Hospital and also held a meeting with the hospital administration and doctors for uninterrupted provision of free treatment

under the Balochistan Health Card. Abdullah Khan, on the occasion, said that BAMHH is unique among the private hospitals of Quetta city where patients receive the best health facilities under the supervision of qualified doctors and the best medical equipment and facilities in place. Earlier, the health secretary also approved the establishment of the EPI Statistical Center in Balochistan Askari Mall Healthcare Hospital.



QUETTA: Employees of Balochistan University are holding protest rally against non-payment of their salaries, at Sariyab road in Quetta.



QUETTA: President HELP Balochistan former caretaker Provincial Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Jogezi distributing ration among deserving families

## Pakistan Post to hold 53rd International letter writing competition

QUETTA (APP): Manager Marketing Postal Services Balochistan Faisal Jahangir on Thursday said that Pakistan Post is holding 53rd international letter writing competition 2024 for young people in a joint move with the universal Postal Union (UPU).

He said that the theme for the competition is "Write a letter to future generation about the world you hope they inherit?"

In addition to Pakistan Postage Stamps Album and Certificate of merit following three cash prizes will be awarded to those winning first three positions in this competition, 1st Prize, Rs. 10000/, 2nd Prize Rs. 8000/, 3rd Prize Rs. 5000/.

He said that consolation prizes would also be given to 50 best letter writers, the best letter in Pakistan (English version only) would be sent to the Uni-

versal Postal Union, where a jury set up by UPU would select winners to be awarded gold, silver and bronze medals bearing relevant inscription and their names as well as certificates and other consolation prizes by the UPU.

Students of not more than 15 years of age can participate in the competition by sending a letter either in English or Urdu duly verified by the head of their educational institution to the Assistant Director (Mail & PS) office of the Postmaster General Balochistan Quetta, he mentioned. He said that the following particulars should be authenticated by the Head of the educational institution.

Full Name, Father Name, Age, Class, Name of institution with complete address & telephone number, length of letter from 500 to 800 words.

## WAPDA Chairman affirms crucial role in national development

MIRPUR (APP): In a message commemorating World Water Day, Chairman WAPDA Engr. Lt Gen (retd) Sajjad Ghani underscores the pivotal role of water resources in sustaining life and fostering human development. Emphasizing the significance of effectively harnessing Pakistan's abundant water resources, he highlights WAPDA's unwavering commitment to the nation's water, food, and energy security. Chairman Ghani proudly announces WAPDA's implementation of the largest development portfolio, featuring eight transformative mega projects. These ambitious endeavors, including the Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project, and others, are poised to revolutionize Pakistan's economic landscape, providing essential water resources.