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Addresses first meeting of the federal cabinet

## Elite classes don't require subsidies, tax collection vital for national economy: PM

Says Allah Almighty had bestowed upon them the responsibility to serve the nation and reiterated to meet their expectations by striving day and night.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday regretted that elite classes in the country had monopoly over the 90 percent resources of the country and stressed that they did not deserve any subsidies. The prime minister underscored that they required to control the issue of tax evasion and power

and gas thefts to ensure availability of maximum resources for the development of the country. He further said that the government was ensuring all out efforts for the availability of daily commodities during the holy month of Ramazan at affordable prices and declared that no leniency in this regard would be tolerated. Addressing the first

meeting of the federal cabinet, the prime minister said that Allah Almighty had bestowed upon them the responsibility to serve the nation and reiterated to meet their expectations by striving day and night. Highlighting the huge economic challenges, he said that the masses had given them the responsibility to address these serious issues and they were

equally answerable to the people who had given them a mandate to form the government.

He urged the members of the cabinet to serve the nation and country with new fervor and commitment so that in the history, they could be remembered for delivering on their promises.

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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari administering oath of office to members of Federal Cabinet at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: The Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan Mr. Justice Qazi Faez Isa administering the oath of office to Honourable Mr. Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, Chief Justice, High Court of Balochistan as Judge of the Supreme court of Pakistan at the Supreme Court.

## 19-member federal cabinet takes oath

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday administered oath of office to a 19-member Federal Cabinet at a ceremony here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The event began with the playing of the national anthem followed by recitation from the Holy Quran. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, leadership of mainstream political parties, parliamentarians and senior government officials attended the event. The cabinet members who took the oath included

Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Abdul Aleem Khan, Jam Kamal Khan, Engr. Amir Muqam, Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Attaullah Tarar, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Musadik Malik, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, and Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

## Moon sighted, first Ramadan to begin from today

PESHAWAR (APP): The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad on Monday announced that the moon of holy month of Ramadan has been sighted at various nook and cranny of the country and the first of Ramazan, 1445 AH would fall on Tuesday, March 12.



Addressing a press conference, he said despite cloudy weather condition at various areas of the country, the committee had received solid testimonies of moon sighting from a number of areas.

Maulana Azad informed that the meeting witnessed the participation of esteemed members from both Central and Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committees, including Director General Syed Mushahid Hussain Khalid from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Ghulam Murtaza from the Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission, Dr Sardar Sarfaraz from the Pakistan Meteorological Department, and Zainul Abedin from the Ministry of Science and Technology.

## Heavy rains lash various parts of Balochistan, Met office predicts more rains

GWADAR (INP): Heavy rains continued in Quetta, Gwadar, Chaman, and other parts of Balochistan during the last 24 hours, creating urban flooding like situation with reports of house collapsed in various incidents in the province.

According to details, heavy rains in Quetta, Gwadar, Turbat, Naushki, Pashin, Chaman and others areas in Balochistan have aggravated the woe of the residents and suspended normal life in the province. The rain left roads and streets flooded with water

and submerged low-lying areas. Light rain was also reported in several areas of Karachi during the past 24 hours.

According to Met office, 21 millimetres of rainfall was recorded in Gwadar over the last 24 hours, 10mm in Turbat and 2mm in Ormara, Turbat and Jiwhani. The Met Office said rain and thunderstorms with isolated showers were forecast in Turbat, Kech, Gwadar, Jiwhani, Pashni, Ormara, Panjur, Kharan, Kalat, Khuzdar, Lasbela, and Awaran districts today.

## Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan takes oath as judge of SC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan has taken oath as judge of Supreme Court (SC).

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has administered oath to Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan.

The oath taking ceremony took place in SC.

SC judges, senior lawyers and court's staff attended the oath taking ceremony.

Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan has served as chief justice of Balochistan High Court (BHC). National Judicial Council (NJC) had recommended to make him judge of SC.

With the elevation of Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, the number of judges of SC has reached 14.



QUETTA: Justice Muhammad Ijaz Swati administering oath to Justice Hashim Khan Kakar as acting Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court

## Saudi King greets Zardari on taking oath as President

ISLAMABAD (INP): Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz has congratulated Asif Ali Zardari on taking oath as President of Pakistan.

In an official message to the President, he wished him success, and further progress and prosperity to the people of Pakistan. The Saudi King also highlighted the depth of brotherly relations between the two countries and expressed the keenness to further develop these ties.

## Zardari presented guard of honour at Aiwan-e-Sadr

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Asif Ali Zardari was presented guard of honor at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad as he assumed office of the President of Pakistan Monday.

During the ceremony, the national anthem was played while smartly turned-out contingents of the Armed Forces of Pakistan presented him salute. The President inspected the guard of honor.

Later, the President Zardari was introduced with the staff of the Aiwan-e-Sadr.



QUETTA: MPA Zarak Khan Mandokhail and Commissioner Quetta Hamza Shafiq meeting with Speaker Balochistan Assembly Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai

## President Zardari, Tajik President reaffirm to further strength bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari and President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon on Monday reiterated their desire to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Tajikistan in the areas of mutual interest.

Tajik President made a telephone call to President Asif Ali Zardari and extended his warmest felicitations to him on becoming the President of Pakistan, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. Talking to his Tajik counterpart, President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan highly valued its ties with the brotherly country of Tajikistan which were based on shared religion, culture and history. He said that both coun-

tries needed to work together for further improving bilateral cooperation.

While appreciating Tajikistan's high potential in hydel resources, President Zardari expressed Pakistan's desire to work with Tajikistan in this important area for the mutual advantage of the two brotherly countries.

The president also exchanged greetings on the advent of the holy month of Ramazan and also felicitated the Tajik President on the upcoming Nowruz, Persian New Year celebrations.

The Tajik President also extended an invitation to President Asif Ali Zardari to visit Tajikistan.

President Zardari fondly recalled his earlier visits to Tajikistan and accepted the invitation.

## CM directs to PDMA, district administration to remain alert in rain & snowfall situation

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has directed to Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), district administration and local bodies institutions to remain fully alert in the situation of rain and snowfall in Quetta and other areas of the province.

The Chief Minister directed to all the administrative officers including Commissioner/Administrator and Deputy Commissioners to ensure their presence in the field.

He also directed to all Deputy Commissioners and Municipal heads to

take speedy measures for draining out of the rain water from the human settlements and localities in their respective areas.

In addition to this, the heavy machinery must be kept ready at the sites for restoration of the communication means in case of the blockage.

The Chief Minister also directed to remove the encroachments and hurdles created in the streams and nullahs so as to drain out the rain water from there.

Similarly, there should be quick response in case of any emergent situation while monitoring the whole situation from control room, adding he stressed. He also stressed the

need to make the municipal services effective for draining out the rain water in the low lying areas.

He directed to keep a vigil on the electricity installations besides restoring the power system while mobilizing the staff of Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO).

While on the other hand, the general public should also adopt precautionary measures in situation of rain, he advised.

They (general public) should also keep themselves away from the drain passages, muddy walls and constructions besides electricity installations, the Chief Minister stressed further.

PM says:

## Transforming Pak-Saudi ties into strategic, economic partnership govt's priority

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that his government's priority was to transform the time-tested Pakistan-Saudi Arabia ties into a mutually beneficial, strategic and economic partnership, with a focus on attracting Saudi investment for bankable projects in Pakistan.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Saudi Ambassador in Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, who called on him, thanked Saudi authorities for expanding the scope of the "Road to Makkah" initiative, that would facilitate

Pakistani Hajj pilgrims. He thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdul Aziz, and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, for their kind wishes on his re-election as prime minister. Given the special fraternal relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the prime minister said the Saudi ambassador was the first envoy he received after re-appointment of office.

Extending an invitation to the prime minister to visit Saudi Arabia, the ambassador assured him of the Saudi leadership's full support.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## CM greets Muslim Ummah on beginning of Ramadanul Mubarak

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has greeted the Muslim Ummah on beginning of holy month of Ramadanul Mubarak and stressed that we have to make pledge to eliminate every kind of negative activities together that otherwise creates hurdles in development and prosperity of the country and nation besides the law and order.

In a felicitation message issued here on Monday, the Chief Minister said that the holy month of Ramadanul Mubarak is the best opportunity for everyone to start their lives afresh and that in a better manner.

Everyone should correct oneself as the fasting is truly source to seek taqwa. He said that the objective of fasting is to make the human being obedient to the orders of Allah Almighty. The Chief Minister said that the fasting also plays basic role in promoting the positive thinking, brotherhood and mutual sense of feeling in the society besides enabling to face the extraordinary circumstances.

He said that the objective of fasting is to make the human being obedient to the orders of Allah Almighty. The Chief Minister said that the fasting also plays basic role in promoting the positive thinking, brotherhood and mutual sense of feeling in the society besides enabling to face the extraordinary circumstances.

In addition to this, the hardships of underprivileged people and those deprived of the basic necessities. Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti urged the philanthropists to take special care of the labourers and poor segments of the society in the holy month.

## Time schedule of NA March 13 session changed

ISLAMABAD (Online): Time schedule of National Assembly (NA) session to be held on March 13 has been changed.

According to notification issued by NA Secretariat the NA session on March 13 will commence from 4 p.m instead of 2 p.m.

## Ramazan Relief Package to provide succour to poor masses: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said that the incumbent government had announced a historic Ramazan Relief Package to provide succour to the masses facing price hike.

He said Pakistan was facing economic challenges and he was aware that it had increased problems for the masses and appealed to the well to do to support the vulnerable people in their surroundings.

In a message on the arrival of Ramazan ul Mubarak 1445 Hijrah, the prime minister felicitated the nation and the Muslim Ummah and said that they were blessed to reap the blessings of the holy month once again, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release on Monday.

He observed that by following the commands of Allah Almighty, the Muslims in this month, revived the true spirit of religious rites and rituals.

The month further fostered the basic principles of mutual sympathy, affection, brotherhood and cooperation in the society, he added.

The prime minister said that the holy month not only provided opportunity to individuals to seek forgiveness of their sins and achieve moral reforms but also

created a suitable environment for physical health.

It also contributed towards the overall eradication of evils in the society by strengthening the qualities of patience, tolerance, forgiveness, sympathy and control over human desires, thus providing an opportunity to start a new chapter in life, he observed.

The prime minister said that a person with fasting could realize the plight and feelings of poor and those financially weak around his milieu which prompted sentiments for supporting each other.

The prime minister also urged the nation to pray for the oppressed people of Gaza, Palestine and reiterated that the government of Pakistan and the entire Pakistani nation was not only condemning the atrocities of aggressor Israel against the innocent Palestinians but also demanding of the international community to secure immediate ceasefire.

He also asked the nation to remember the oppressed Kashmiris who had been facing the Indian cruelties and aggression in IIOJK.

The prime minister also prayed for the success, progress and prosperity of the nation and the country.



QUETTA: Ration being distributed among poor and needy families on eve of Ramazanul Mubarak from Qatar Charity

## PM desires constitution of a committee to control prices of daily commodities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed for immediate constitution of a committee to check the prices of daily commodities and edibles.

He also directed for strict action against the unnecessary price hike and illegal profiteering and said that no leniency would be tolerated in this regard.

The prime minister chaired the maiden meeting of the newly elected cabinet, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of the ministry of trade, approved imposition of a ban on the export of bananas and onion till April 15. The ban was made effective to ensure ample availability of these items in the market during the holy month of Ramazan.

The federal cabinet, on the recommendation of ministry of interior, sanctioned an application of a citizen of Netherlands Muhammad Aurangzeb for again seeking the Pakistani citizenship.

The meeting also approved appointment of Major General Abdul Moeed HI (M) as Director General Anti Narcotics Force on the recommendation of relevant ministry.



QUETTA: Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) Administrator, Hamza Shafiqat is visiting the city after heavy rains

## EC issues notification of some other woman on seat reserved for JUI-F women

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has issued notification of some other woman on the seat reserved for JUI-F women.

JUI-F has demanded for investigation into matter and nullification of notification.

In the letter addressed to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) by JUI-F it has been said that EC has issued notification of some unknown woman from KP on the reserved seat of woman against JUI quota. The notification for success has been issued on reserved seat of woman in

National Assembly.

According to letter the notification has been issued under number F-6 of 2024.

In the letter JUI-F chairman Maulana Fazlur Rehman said Sadaf Ehsan is neither member of party nor her name is included in JUI-F list. It was requested in the letter that Sadaf Ehsan notification be cancelled and notification of success of Miss Hina Bibi be issued.

The matter for issuing notification in name of stranger woman against reserved seat be investigated that either it is mistake or has been issued in connivance.

## PTI leaders Latif Khosa, Suleman released

LAHORE (Online): PTI leaders Latif Khosa and Suleman Akram Ranjha have been released.

The family sources of both of PTI leaders have confirmed the reports of their release.

Family sources said Police had arrested Latif Khosa and Suleman Akram Ranjha while they were protesting. They have been released overnight.

It is pertinent to mention here that Latif Khosa, Suleman Akram Raja and MPA Hafiz Farhat Abbas were arrested during PTI rally against alleged rigging in polls on Sunday in Lahore.

## Curriculum of 9th to 12th classes changed, NCCP introduces 62 new subjects

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Curriculum Council of Pakistan (NCCP) Monday announced the introduction of 62 new subjects for classes nine through twelve, marking a significant curriculum update after 28 years.

The director of NCCP confirmed that a total of 38 subjects for the overall curriculum of classes nine through twelve have been revamped.

He informed that in the optional subjects, Trade Fair Technical Education and Technical Subjects have been added to the National Council's curriculum.

The Director stated that in the technical educa-

tion subjects, 10 additional technical subjects, 14 upgraded technical subjects, and 38 optional subjects for classes nine through twelve are introduced.

In the first phase in Sindh, he said new educational content can be expected for the optional subjects of ninth to eleventh classes next year.

The technical education subjects will now include Medical Technology, Fashion Designing, and Dress Making, as announced by the Director. Other subjects such as Graphic Designing and Media Production, Hospitality Management, Tourism Management, and Data Coding will also be

incorporated.

The upgraded technical subjects will cover areas like Advertising, Telecommunication Technology, and Solar Construction, along with Computer Application, Computer Hardware, Marketing, Entrepreneurship, and Event Management.

Additionally, subjects such as Food Processing, Conservation, Motor Winding, Automation and Robotics Technology, Welding, and Woodwork will also be included.

The NCCP director also said some global languages are also being added as subjects in the new curriculum, including Chinese, French, Persian and Arabic.



KARACHI: View of huge fire flames rise from burning vehicle after traffic accident, at North Karachi Power House roundabout in Karachi.

## Pakistan Navy, PMSA recovers 10 bodies out of 14 missing fishermen of Al-Assad boat

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Navy (PN) in coordination with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) recovered 10 dead bodies out of 14 missing fishermen of boat Al-Assad in a joint search and rescue operation.

The Search and Rescue operation was started on 5th in open sea. Despite dense marine traffic in vicinity of accident, time lapse and choppy sea conditions the dead bodies of 10 missing fishermen were recovered on Monday, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

The fishing boat Al-Assad with an onboard crew of 45 capsized in open sea off Hajmro creek on

March 5th due to inclement weather. Search operation involved multiple assets of PN and PMSA including aircraft, helicopters, ships and speed boats.

Major break through of search efforts materialised today when PMSS REHMAT upon receipt of information from deployed units recovered 10 dead bodies of missing fishermen.

The recovered bodies have been handed over to concerned civil authorities for further formalities.

The conduct of continuous Search and rescue operation by PN and PMSA is a manifestation of PN's resolve to assist in every civil calamity at Sea.

## Justice Abid sends petition to CJ filed by SIC against not giving reserved seats

LAHORE (Online): Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh has sent petition against non giving the reserved seats to Sunni Itehad Council (SIC) to chief justice for referring it to respective bench.

The petition filed by Abdullah Malik advocate came up for hearing before justice Abid Aziz Sheikh Monday.

He recommended in his judicial note that another single bench is hearing the petition of this nature. This petition be also presented before the respective bench for hearing.

In the petition the step

for not giving reserved seats to SIC has been challenged.

The plea has been taken in the petition the petitioner wrote 4 letters to EC in connection with reserved seats. The EC instead of giving reserved seats fixed the petition for preliminary hearing.

It was said in the petition that under election act reserved seats will be given to political party in proportion to number of winning candidates. EC is neither tribunal nor court. Therefore, EC decision be declared null and void.

## 'Fascist government has lost its senses': Umar Ayub

ISLAMABAD (INP): Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and PTI leader Umar Ayub has criticized the government, accusing it of authoritarianism and human rights violations following the arrest of over 100 PTI workers during a recent protest.

Addressing reporters in Islamabad on Monday, Ayub expressed concerns over what he termed as the government's heavy-

handed response to peaceful protests, alleging that basic human rights were being disregarded. He particularly criticized the police for failing to uphold their duty during the protests and for making unwarranted arrests, including those of prominent PTI figures like MNA Latif Khosa and PTI lawyer Salman Akram Raja.

## Harassment of journalists case: SC rejects reports by police, FIA

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) while expressing reservation has rejected all reports filed by police and FIA in the case of harassment of journalists.

The court has ordered to file fresh reports again on next hearing.

The court while issuing notices to the respondents on the petition filed against Joint Investigation Team (JIT) constituted by FIA on the application of Press Association of Pakistan (PASC) that can proceedings of contempt of court be initiated against all media houses for running one statement of SC.

SC has directed police and FIA that replies be filed on next hearing with the latest progress and if it is done so then the court will be forced to think these two institutions are facilitating the criminals.

SC gave these remarks during hearing of the case on Monday.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the CJP Qazi Faez Isa took up the case for hearing on Monday.

The CJP while giving remarks on the statement of commissioner for allegations involving him in general election said that no media house deemed it proper to investigate it and they even did not ask from the commissioner who has

told him all this.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by CJP Qazi Faez Isa took up the case for hearing Monday.

The CJP remarked media houses should have made investigation first of all in this regard and then news like this should have been run.

He asked for Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) and counsel for Press Association of Supreme Court (PASC) that can proceedings of contempt of court be initiated against all media houses for running one statement of SC.

CJP further remarked freedom of media is as per constitution. It is not only mentioned in the articles related to freedom of press but mention has been made in this regard in other articles as well.

CJP said to Salah ud Din, counsel for PASC what application he has filed with reference to JIT, he should assist court in other cases of media too in addition to it.

The court directed the AGP copy of other petitions be given to Salah ud Din advocate just now.

The court remarked arguments will be given with reference to JIT and it will be decided in this regard.

The court has asked the respondents to come fully prepared in this regard and give arguments in the court. The hearing of the case will be held after two weeks.

Regarding contempt of court Salah ud Din advocate argued SC has powers with reference to contempt of court. It does not need to see some other institutions, or other matters or to initiate any proceedings in this regard.

He said editorial team should investigate all the news items and no such news item be released which affects freedom of judiciary or some aspect of contempt of court comes out of them.

CJP remarked one man gives statement and he levels allegations in the statement then should such news be run without any investigation or without asking from him what evidence he has on the basis of which he is leveling the allegations. Salah ud Din advocate said matters run in media in different ways.

CJP resented over IG Islamabad in the case against notices issued by FIA to journalists and their harassment. The CJP remarked AG Sabh what type of IG he is. He should be removed from his office.



LARKANA: BiBi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari showering flowers on the grave of Shaheed Zulfaqar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.

## Elite classes don't require...

*Continued from page 1*

After February 8 general elections, the political parties received a split mandate, the PML-N, PPP and the allied parties were given the mandate to form the government.

Now, this mandate should be respected which also required that they should concentrate their energies and move on the path of progress rapidly, he added.

The prime minister said that during their previous 16-month government, the people had witnessed their performance, adding that they saved the country from running into default.

The prime minister said when they assumed the reigns of the previous government, they had two choices; either to sit as silent spectators or be counted, at that time they had decided to take responsibility of the country.

Then the interim government followed them but the economic situation in the country was stable and did not worsen, he opined.

The prime minister said that once more, they took the responsibility of steering the country out of the huge challenges and without wasting time, they should tread upon that path leading to destination.

Felicitating the nation on the arrival of Ramazan, he said that about Rs12 billion Ramazan Package was received initiated under which the edible items at the Utility Stores and mobile utility stores would be provided to the poor and de-

serving.

Besides, under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) millions of rupees were being distributed among the poor as additional cash amount.

He underlined the need of strict monitoring of the distribution of different items under Ramazan package so that the food stuff should be readily available to the deserving.

Mentioning the spiraling price hike as one of the major challenge, he stressed that the federal government, in collaboration with the provinces, would take measures to reduce it especially in the holy month of Ramazan.

"I will not tolerate any kind of disturbance in the prices of commodities in the federal territory," he emphasized and assured support and assistance to the provinces.

He said that they would make all out efforts to provide relief to the commoners.

"On one hand, the common man is being crushed under burden of price hike, but on the other, the rich had control over 90 per cent of country's resources," he observed and called upon the well to do to play their due role for the national prosperity.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also regretted that about Rs500 billion power theft was being reported annually and questioned the subsidy provided to the elite classes, terming it the biggest contradiction.

He further mentioned that the combined circular

debt of power and gas sector had spiraled to 5000 billion rupees now.

The prime minister also referred to high costs of power due to functioning of the 'junk plants' running on diesel and incurring billion of losses.

He maintained that different mafias involved in this cycle should be dealt with by reforms and improvement in the earliest.

"The fatal cancer has hollowed the nation," he said, adding that alone PIA, the national flag carrier, had ballooning debt and liabilities of about Rs 840 billion, whereas other state owned enterprises were also incurring billions of rupees losses annually.

He said that they were taking loans to pay salaries to the employees of these state entities.

The prime minister also underscored the need of enhancement of tax net without burdening the honest tax payers, besides stressing that loopholes which led to tax evasion of billion of rupees should be plugged.

Expressing his anguish, he said that the contradiction in the tax system could be gauged from the fact that retailers were being taxed sparing the wholesalers. He said that he was forced to say 'now do or die, now or never'.

They had taken the responsibility which did not revolve around mere distribution of ministries, but 'a journey full of blood sweat and sacrifice and nothing else'.

He observed that those nations had reached to the destination that had

the passion for sacrifice, adding that they should not fight among themselves, but rather direct their struggle against corruption, poverty and deprivation.

"The whole nation is facing the challenges, and they are accountable to them. They should not dither or delay and I will not tolerate one second wastage of time," he added.

The prime minister also expressed the hope that the new cabinet members would meet the challenges as it was a perfect combination of youth and experience, which could serve as engine to take the nation forward.

He also mentioned the climate change as another vital challenge which had caused devastation in the past.

The prime minister said that government functionaries performing well would be appreciated and encouraged but the black sheep would be exposed.

He further said that the youth bulge of the country was a huge asset which required to be converted into great opportunity, adding that they would formulate a complete economic plan in this regard.

The prime minister also termed the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), as an effective mechanism in improving the investment environment in the country, and cutting the red tape and serious delays.

The prime minister said that Pakistan would seek foreign investment instead loans and highlighted various steps in this regard

## Federal Ombudsman disposes of 193,030 complaints

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dilating on the international linkages of this office, the senior advisor observed that the office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib was an active member of the International Ombudsman's Institute (IOI) the OIC Ombudsman Association (AOA) (OICOA) and the Asian Ombudsman Association.

He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib was elected unopposed as President of the AOA by the General Assembly of the Asian Ombudsman Association, which was a 47-member strong professional body of Ombudsmen of the Asian Region representing more than two thirds of the world population, which was indeed a great honour for the country.

He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat was often referred to as the poor man's court since it strives to bring administrative justice to the people especially to those belonging to the marginalized and deprived segments of the population.

He said that owing to the hard work and dedication of our officers and by employing instruments like the Khuli Katcharies and the Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) programmes, this office had been able to redress large number of public complaints, thereby providing relief to a sizeable segment

of the people in a hassle-free manner.

It was started in April 2022 in some offices but latter extended to other as well in view of its massive success in speedy resolution of public problems. He said that there was a great deal of improvement in redressing the public complaints which are lately exhibiting an upward trend due to increase in population and other factors.

He elaborated that during the year 2022 this office received 164,174 complaints, which swelled to 194,099 in 2023 which is, a reflection of the public trust and confidence in this office.

He particularly referred to the steps taken for resolution of the problems and welfare of the Overseas Pakistanis, pensioners and prisoners specially the women and juvenile prisoners in jails, which resulted in considerably improving their lot.

He informed that now there were 18 Regional Offices and four Complaints Collection Centers, covering nearly the entire length of the country.

Advisor (Appraisal) Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat Shahid Hamayun, Advisor Media Inam Ul Haq Javed, Registrar Muhammad Saqib Khan and Director General Admim Muhammad Saifdar also briefed the delegation.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zahed Ahmed Babar Sidhu calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## National Policy Framework is all set to submit in NEC

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives is all set to submit the National Planning Framework (NPF) before the National Economic Council NEC after lengthy deliberations.

The Planning Ministry on Monday organized a workshop on NPF which was attended by the Deputy Chairman Planning Commission of Pakistan Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan, Secretary Planning Ministry, Awaiz Manzur Sumra and other federal and provincial officials of the various ministries. NPF aims to guide planning process, development and improve project effectiveness.

It will help to define contours for federal and provincial public investment financing. The framework will lay out the national objectives and ensure that the polices, plans and projects contribute for the provision of public goods and improve service delivery. Furthermore, it will draw broad jurisdictional lines between federal and provincial domains for funding of development schemes and alignment with the Federal plans. It will also aim to harmonize development spending, done through federal and provincial development programs, to achieve optimum development outcomes at all levels; federal, provincial and

local. Speaking at the occasion, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Muhammad Jehanzeb Khan NPF is a milestone for determining and coordinating the national and development priorities between the Federation and the provinces. This framework will set the guidelines for determining the scope of federal and provincial governments in the effective use of resources and national priorities," said Khan emphasizing that public welfare is the responsibility of the government, while there is a need to clearly define which areas of development are under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments.

## Senate unveils annual parliamentary Year Report 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate has released the Comprehensive Annual Report for the Parliamentary Year 2023-24, highlighting a year marked by remarkable accomplishments and steadfast dedication to the nation.

The comprehensive report underscores the relentless efforts and exemplary work of the Senate, emphasizing the outstanding performance of its Standing Committees. The commitment of committee members has played a crucial role in advancing the legislative agenda and addressing critical national issues. During the year, the house met for a total of 152 hours and 58 minutes, with an average of 2 hours and 35 minutes per session. The house successfully passed 14 Government bills and 29 private members' bills, out of a total of 99 presented.

Moreover, the Senate addressed 65 points of public importance, demonstrating its responsiveness to the concerns and needs of the public.

Additionally, the report highlights the Senate's active engagement with public petitions, with 45 petitions successfully resolved and 145 petitions

referred to Senate Committees for further consideration. The report also delves into the performance reports of various departments within the Senate Secretariat, identifying areas of improvement and ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing efficiency.

Furthermore, during the Parliamentary year 2023-24, the Senate received a total of 710 public petitions, with 145 petitions referred to Senate Committees for review and resolution. Embracing modern technology, the Senate has introduced virtual meetings, enhancing efficiency and transparency.

Initiatives such as the first-time live ticker during Senate sessions, the upgrading of broadcasting and post-production facilities, and 4k web-casting of the Senate YouTube Channel reflect the Senate's commitment to embracing digital transformation.

The Senate of Pakistan also takes pride in its active engagement with international delegations and the initiation of Parliamentary Diplomacy initiatives, contributing to fostering diplomatic relations and promoting collaboration on global issues.



ISLAMABAD: President Azad Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhary being briefed about Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell.

## Palestine issue must be a collective priority of Muslim world: Dr Ateq

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Gaza conflict is not merely politically rooted but fundamentally humanitarian, with a collective responsibility of the Muslim world to provide support through a unified response at all levels as the Palestine crisis requires not just expressions of solidarity but cohesive and collective strength of Muslim Ummah.

This was observed by Dr Ateq Al Garbi, an expert on Yemen-Gulf affairs and the executive director of the Mokha Center for Strategic Studies, Turkiye, during a session on 'The War on Gaza: Dynamics in the Red Sea', held here at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

The session, chaired by Brig © Said Nazir, was joined by Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Prof Dr Fakhr-ul-Islam, Prof Dr Shahzad Iqbal Sham, Prof Dr Tughral Yamin, and others, said a press release.

The evolving dynamics of the century-old Palestine crisis have resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives and the displacement of millions.

Despite its Islamic significance, efforts to unite against Israel and its allies are hindered by divisions within the Muslim world, especially among Arab states.

Muslim world remains fragmented while their adversaries are finding common ground.

Dr Ateq underlined that weaknesses and fragmentation in the Arab world hamper a coordinated and cohesive response.

This includes the divisions and the absence of unity among Islamic mobilization movements and the respective political leadership in the Middle East. These entities must work together with the government to devise a common stance and mobilize towards it collectively.

## Khawar Manika appears in Iddat case without lawyer

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ex-husband of Bushra Bibi, Khawar Manika, here on Monday could not present a defense counsel during proceedings of the appeal of PTI founder and Bushra Bibi against their conviction in the Iddat Case

Session Judge of the District and Session Court Islamabad, Shahrukh Arjmand, heard the appeals.

Khawar Manika appeared before the court and took the position that he had appeared without a defense counsel due to time constraints.

Meanwhile, PTI lawyers Usman Riyaq Gul, Shiraz Ranjha, and Khalid Yusuf Chaudhry filed a separate application for the suspension of the sentence on behalf of Bushra Bibi.

The application stated that the court had already declared the application admissible for a hearing.

## Tribunal upholds CCP's order against P&G Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Appellate Tribunal has upheld an order passed by the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) against Procter and Gamble Pakistan (P&G) for engaging in deceptive marketing practices. The Tribunal dismissed P&G appeal to set aside CCP's ruling.

In its ruling, the Tribunal also stated that the CCP has the authority to determine the legitimacy of a complaint and to decide whether to accept or dismiss it based on the complaint's merits, said a press release issued.

The CCP had imposed a penalty of 10 million rupees on P&G for falsely advertising its product Safeguard as Pakistan's No. 1 anti-bacterial soap. However, the Tribunal reduced the penalty to five million rupees, considering P&G's compliance-oriented approach and the fact that P&G had dropped the No-1 claim shortly after the initiation of enquiry by the CCP in 2014.

The enquiry was initiated based on a complaint filed by Reckitt Benckiser Pakistan Limited.

## NDMA to host first-ever Int'l expo on Disaster Risk Reduction 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a proactive approach to disaster management, National Disaster Management Authority ( NDMA) is all set to organize first-ever Pakistan's International Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PIEDRR) 2024, which is scheduled to be held on April 23 to 25, here at the Pak China Friendship Center.

Capitalizing on success of the previous year's expo, Pakistan Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction, this year PIEDRR 2024 is dedicated to fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of knowledge to create safer, more resilient

societies capable of withstanding global disasters, a news release said issued here on Monday. This year's expo will welcome participants from 44 countries across the globe including member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and partner countries of NDMA.

The PIEDRR 2024 aims to serve as a pivotal global platform to achieve key objectives, including establishment of collaborative partnerships to support joint initiatives and research worldwide, knowledge exchange among global experts.

## IHC allows Firdous to meet PTI founder

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has granted permission to Firdous Shamim Naqvi, a member of the core committee of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), to meet the PTI founder at Adiala Jail.

Justice Samman Riffat Imtiaz heard Firdous Shamim's plea on Monday, seeking permission to meet the PTI founder.

Defense Counsel Babar Awan argued before the court that Firdous Shamim, being a member of the core committee of PTI, was deliberately not allowed to meet the PTI founder by the jail administration.



ISLAMABAD: Sherdils demonstrating their skills during rehearsal ahead of the Pakistan Day parade on 23rd March.

## Development work in Badin among top priorities: MNA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party's Member National Assembly, Haji Rasool Bux Chandio on Monday said the development work in Badin district was his foremost priority including the construction parks for both women and children.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held in his honor here. He said the party has given instructions for the provision of facilities to the people. "Steps will be taken to fix quota for children of poor people in private educational institutions," Rasool Bux Chandio further said that success in the elections will come to those who stay in touch with the people and resolve their problems. He stressed that parks for children and women in various cities of the district would be constructed and existing parks would be improved by providing more facilities.

On the special directives of President Asif Ali Zardari, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhatto Zardari and Faryal Talpur, he said that all the possible facilities would be provided to the common man of Badin.

## Gohar files petition in IHC in connection with meeting with PTI founder

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has filed petition in Islamabad High Court (IHC) in connection with his meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan.

Interior secretary, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and superintendent Adiala jail have been made respondents in the petition.

He has taken plea in the petition that chairman PTI Gohar Ali Khan, secretary general Umar Ayub and secretary Shibil Faraz want to meet PTI founder. Therefore, orders be issued to Adiala jail authorities to allow them to meet Imran Khan.

Later Barrister Gohar Ali Khan while talking to media men said there were some documents related to general election which they had taken with them to meet PTI founder. Senate polls are going to take place therefore application has been filed that permission be given for consultation with PTI founder along-with documents. We have too much expectations from the judiciary.

We always come and hope we will be given justice as well. Decisions have been taken on fast pace basis.

## CDA allots 157 govt residences

ISLAMABAD (APP): The management of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has allotted 157 Government residences of different categories to officers and other employees of authority.

The residences were allotted on the basis of seniority on General Waiting List. However, the allocation of residences was made through balloting.

In all 57 houses were allotted 8n A category, 38 houses 8n B category 25 in C category, 17 in D category while 20 houses were allotted in D category in sectors G-6, G-7, G-8, G-9, G-10, G-11 and F-6.

The CDA Chairman on the occasion said that welfare of employees would remain management's top priority.

## Ensuring safe food: IFA holds awareness session with Nanbai Association

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Director Operations of the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr Tahira Siddique with the collaboration of Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries (ICSTSI) conducted a session, aimed at fostering awareness within the Nanbai Association (ISD).

Talking to APP, she said that the session highlighted the role and significance of the Islamabad Food Authority which was participated by over 100 participants.

Commencing with an introduction to the authority, the presentation delved into the paramount importance of upholding food standards and ensuring the safety of food products. Emphasizing the dire need for safe food practices, attendees were enlightened on the methods to uphold such

standards and the collaborative efforts required from all stakeholders, she said.

A key focus was placed on the Islamabad Food Authority's mission to prioritize food standards and collaborate effectively to shield consumers from the perils of foodborne illnesses.

The responsibilities of the authority and the implementation strategies for maintaining food standards were meticulously outlined, underscoring the indispensable role of personal and premises hygiene in food establishments.

Moreover, attendees were educated on the various food safety hazards associated with the consumption of contaminated food and were provided with invaluable insights into safe food preparation, handling, storage, and packaging techniques, she added.

## Crackdown at G-6 Sunday Bazaar against price gouging, nabs 9

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Assistant Commissioner City on Monday visited the G-6 Sunday Bazaar and inspected the district administration arrangements, accompanied by the Magistrate City, market staff.

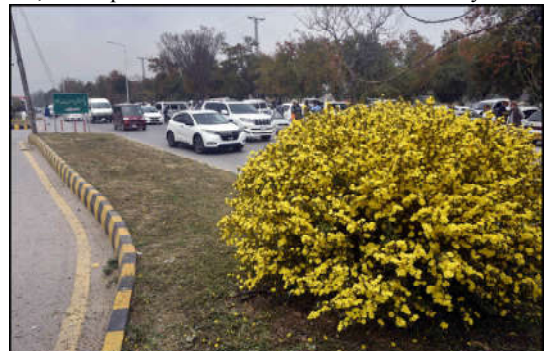
According to the Spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabassum, the AC arrested nine violators for failing to display price lists, selling items at high prices, and other violations. They were handed over to the police.

The assistant commissioner emphasized that price lists were mandatory

and should be visible at all fruit, vegetable, and department stalls within the market.

This crackdown was part of an ongoing effort to combat price hikes, encroachment, and other offenses. Such operations are conducted daily to maintain order and fairness in the market.

On the occasion, AC warned that as the holy month of Ramadan is approaching and the district administration would left no stone unturned to facilitate the masses in city while strict action would be continued against the violators.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of flower blooming on greenbelt along the roadside in the Federal Capital.

## WWF says: All housing projects of industrial workers to be completed in stipulated time periods

ISLAMABAD (APP): All housing projects for registered workers in the industrial sector would be completed in stipulated time periods across the country with all required facilities.

An official source told APP, that a mega project of 2056 residential flats in Peshawar for industrial workers had been completed and handed over to the workers since last year.

The sources said that the price of each flat was Rs 2.6 million, out of which a Rs 300,000 subsidy would be provided by the government and the remain-

ing amount would be paid by the beneficiaries through easy installments. A three percent quota has been allocated for widows and two percent for persons with disabilities.

Those working in industries for three years are eligible for flats to be awarded on an ownership basis through a lucky draw in a transparent manner. It is the mega housing project of the KP Government, completed in line with the vision of the federal government to provide affordable and low-cost housing facilities for people.



ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jams at Islamabad expressway in evening hours, in the Federal Capital.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Tuesday March 12, 2024

### Caretaker debate

As the dust settles on the post-election process, there is increasing public discussion about the concept of caretaker governments, and their utility in Pakistan's political milieu.

Much of this talk has been sparked by the problematic performance of the interim set-up that oversaw last month's general elections. In a recent Senate debate, there were calls to do away with the system of caretakers, with lawmakers saying that it had no place in a parliamentary democracy.

Furthermore, according to some media reports, the PML-N and PPP have decided to jettison the caretaker system. It should be remembered that in the 2006 Charter of Democracy, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif had endorsed the idea of a "neutral caretaker government" to hold free and fair polls.

Apparently, events in Pakistan's political history in the years since the Charter was signed have made both parties reconsider their positions. There was no concept of a caretaker set-up conducting polls in the 1973 Constitution. The idea emerged after the debacle following the 1977 polls, which were widely seen as manipulated. Yet most caretaker governments in the country — with the exception of a few — have failed in their basic task of conducting fair polls accepted by all stakeholders.

Criticism of the last caretaker government has been particularly acute, centring on the fact that the administration overstepped its bounds, and did not provide a level playing field. Elsewhere, few established democracies bring in caretaker set-ups; the incumbents go into 'caretaker mode', with certain restrictions imposed on them to ensure transparency.

In our region, two examples stand out: Bangladesh had introduced the caretaker system, but later scrapped it. However, elections under the incumbents have hardly been free. On the other hand, India has held regular general elections, largely free of controversy, without an interim set-up, mainly because the Indian election commission is suitably empowered.

The new parliament should extensively debate the proposal of eliminating the caretaker set-up before making a decision. While the system in vogue is clearly not delivering, perhaps the reason for this is the weakness of the ECP and its inability to hold polls that all parties consider above board. While the ECP has been empowered on paper, on the ground its performance, particularly in last month's polls, has been disappointing.

The key to meaningful election reform lies with the politicians. They must build trust amongst each other and empower the ECP so that there are no major complaints about the polls' process. If they are able to pull this off in the current legislature's term, the next general elections may no longer require a caretaker set-up.

While there should be no constant constitutional flipping, laws can certainly be amended to fix the major bugs in Pakistan's electoral system.

### Malecha Lodhi

What will US foreign policy look like under Donald Trump 2.0? Governments and people across the world have already started assessing this as the former president appears increasingly likely to return to power even though the election is far too early to call. But irrespective of who wins the presidential race, there is a general perception of the US among the international community that is informing assessments about Washington's future engagement with the world.

This concerns the intensely polarised state of the country, which frequently gridlocks the political system, threatens government shutdowns and paralyses Congress. So much so that agreement on the budget proves elusive, and even aid to America's closest ally (Israel) fails to pass Congress. Institutional dysfunction and other challenges to its democracy compels administrations to be much more preoccupied with domestic challenges and troubles.

This in turn means Washington's international engagement is neither seen

as sustained nor consistent and US reliability also comes into question. This at a time when the US is no longer the sole dominant power in a growing multipolar world, which imposes limits on its power.

The prospect of another Trump presidency only reinforces this perception given both his unpredictability and 'America First' unilateralist approach, which produced so much disruption and discontinuity in foreign policy in his first term and eroded America's international standing. His isolationist approach also made the country retrench from its global role.

As he is now a known quantity, will it be easier for the world to deal with him? Not necessarily. His mercurial and whimsical personality makes it uncertain whether his second term will just mimic the first and offer more of the same in foreign policy. His impulsiveness makes it difficult to gauge his future policies with certainty especially as he is capable of suddenly changing course.

When Joe Biden became president, his defining phrase of how his adminis-

tration would depart from Trump was 'America is back'. It meant more expansive and energetic US engagement with the world in line with traditional US policy and global role. But in several core areas his approach was not different from that of his predecessor.

In others, his administration's declaratory policy was not matched by operational reality, as for example the aim to 'restore America's global leadership'. On China, his policy differed little from Trump's, except perhaps in tone. On trade their approach was identical. Trump-era tariffs not only remained intact but were supplemented by tech restrictions unleashing an intense tech war.

Biden's aggressive stance towards Beijing and policy to contain China of course reflected the political consensus in the US for a tougher posture towards Beijing. For their part, Chinese officials saw little to distinguish between Trump and Biden's policies. This prompted Chinese leaders to repeatedly warn Washington against engaging in a Cold War and describe the Biden administration's strategy as one of 'confronta-

tional competition'.

In many respects, Biden's worldview seemed stuck in the past and not in sync with a vastly transformed world. For example, his effort to cast the world into a defining battle between democracy and authoritarian rule was a throwback to a Cold War paradigm and rhetoric. The idea never took off, not least because American democracy itself had regressed.

His chaotic management of the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan was a major blow to US image and credibility. He failed to mediate peace to bring the costly Ukraine war to an end. His policy on Israel's war in Gaza isolated the US from the international community, which wanted the conflict to end, but instead, witnessed repeated American vetoes of ceasefire resolutions in the UN Security Council. This and Washington's arming of Israel also eroded support for Biden from within his own party, especially among young and liberal Democrats.

Not that Trump will be any different on this issue given his staunch pro-Israel stance, which also

appeals to his supporters among evangelical Christians. He said last week that Israel should continue its military offensive until "complete victory" and "finish the problem". His other utterances during the campaign have a familiar ring. He has repeated the America First rhetoric, talked of imposing new trade restrictions/tariffs on China and ending its most favoured nation trading status.

He also chastised Nato allies for not sharing the defence burden. He said in his second term, America would fundamentally rethink "Nato's purpose and its mission" and ask European nations to reimburse the US billions of dollars for military supplies it sent to Ukraine. He even said he would encourage Russia to attack 'delinquent' Nato countries who don't spend what they should on defence.

Much of this is campaign rhetoric. But there is little question that a man who brings business instincts to politics has a strong aversion to supporting wars or getting America embroiled in other people's wars. Which is why Euro-

pean countries should worry most about his return and about the US security guarantee for Europe. Trump will likely force Ukraine into negotiations with Russia to seek a peace deal to end the war and would be unconcerned if the outcome favoured Moscow.

Because Trump has a transactional view of foreign relations that would make his policies unpredictable but also open to pragmatic possibilities. His administration would prefer to strike deals with competitors and rivals rather than try to subdue them, especially given his admiration for strongmen at the helm in some of these countries. His resistance to detail in his foreign policy pronouncements gives him room to manoeuvre and adapt.

Trump's more ambitious, if not sweeping, plans are on the domestic front, which aim to downsize the 'administrative state' and revamp the deep state but will also be driven by revenge. That means the American people will have more to fear from Trump's return than the international community. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Divide and rule

ground realities, or their expectations from the engineering process.

The PML-N campaign, positing Nawaz Sharif as the fourth-time prime minister this year, but despite the party forming the government, this promise was not fulfilled. The PPP promised Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari as PM, but then refused to take cabinet positions, despite supporting the PML-N-led government. PTI voters wanted to see Imran Khan lead the country, but he remains in jail and the party was disallowed its election symbol and the reserved seats its voters deserve as per the Constitution.

What ensues? Five years of political parties delegitimising each other, either for lack of a clear mandate, convictions by the court, or ill-gotten reserved seats — the list goes on. What does this mean for democratic stability? Is this a conducive environment for economic stability? Will rights be protected? What are some signals for the upcoming half decade?

The Shehbaz Sharif-led government has landed at a time when journalists

are incarcerated for doing their job, social media platform Twitter/ X remains blocked, opposition leaders are censored on state television, and peaceful protesters are arrested for exercising their rights.

Notably, no conversation about the election is complete without the appraisal of the impact that the mobile phone network shutdown had on the election process. Using the lukewarm excuse of maintaining security without qualifying the logical merits of such a move, the lack of connectivity not only reduced the potential voter turnout, but also played a primary role in tainting the election result process where presiding officers could not upload the Form 45 results onto the ECP system.

This critical delay put the entire election process into question, and is unforgivable on the part of those behind it. Even the most enthusiastic supporters of the regime criticised this move, which drew international scepticism regarding the fairness of the election. The findings of the research organisation Pildat show a 40 per cent score for elec-

tion result management this year; and a historic low of 40pc post-poll satisfaction rate, matching the rate of the 2002 elections held under dictator General Musharraf.

The ongoing blocking of X signifies an institutional breakdown in Pakistan. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, and the IT and interior ministries have all distanced themselves from the ban, which shows that none of the institutions with the legal mandate to block websites have taken responsibility for the nationwide disruption of a social media platform. What message does this send to anybody wanting to do IT-related business in Pakistan? What will the PML-N government do about the censorship of X — investigate the blocking, order its restoration? Or will the PM and his cabinet continue to tweet using VPNs and pretend like nothing is wrong, as did the caretaker government?

The stifling of critical voices by the state continues, as the political opposition is censored on the state channel that broadcasts parliamentary

proceedings. Journalist Asad Ali Toor has been sent to jail on judicial remand after being in the custody of the FIA for several days in a case booked under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, which continues to be (ab)used to punish journalists.

Despite the Protection of Journalists Act that is meant to protect journalistic sources, the authorities keep pressing Toor to identify his sources. Meanwhile, a social media campaign is accusing him of spreading 'disinformation' for failing to produce evidence of his claims — forgetting the basic principle of journalism being protected by the law protecting one's sources.

Similarly, another journalist Imran Riaz Khan, who, like Toor, has an active YouTube channel, remains in state detention as he was rearrested in a 'terrorism' case right after getting bail in a 'corruption' case. The Committee to Protect Journalists has called for the immediate release of both journalists. Khan and Toor were both the subjects of a BBC documentary Pa-

kistan: Journalists Under Fire released on Feb 16.

While all of this has been happening, a senator — whose party membership was suspended by the PPP earlier this year — submitted a resolution (subsequently withdrawn) in the Upper House calling for a ban on all social media platforms in Pakistan "to protect the youth". Perhaps he was unaware that social media and the IT sector are one of the few sectors that are growing in Pakistan. Unfortunately, their potential growth is being stymied by the uncertainty that arbitrary bans and shutdowns bring.

They must also condemn the forced resignations of politicians, as well as forced joining of other political parties. It is incumbent upon the higher judiciary to protect the mandate of the people and stand against the violation of fundamental rights. Otherwise, we will find ourselves on the brink of complete institutional breakdown.

Democracy cannot be implemented under duress. Civilians must unite to uphold it, and draw red lines. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Leaving the past behind

### Haris Zaki

On Feb 25, 2024, a video surfaced of an assistant sub-inspector from Rawalpindi beating a local man with a metal object in a crowded police station, for selling kites. This incident came on the heels of a video of a police officer assaulting an elderly woman in Taxila. Rawalpindi's top cop CPO Khalid Hamdani took notice of both incidents, and has since dismissed the concerned officers and ordered inquiries against them. It is laudable that these measures have been taken, but clearly more needs to be done to address the root causes of police excesses.

The 1857 War of Independence had left the British Raj scratching their heads about how they would quell any mutinous sentiments still smouldering in the hearts of the Indian people, and prevent any future uprisings. Revolution, after all, is bad for business, and the colonial overlords in London were loath to suffer any further threats to their rapacity in the subcontinent.

Using the brutish Royal Irish Constabulary as a blueprint, the Indian Imperial Police was founded in 1861, a decentralised force that existed within a provincial administrative structure. The high-ranking officers were almost entirely Europeans and British, with Indians recruited as the rank and file (largely from the working class). Its raison d'être was the exertion of tight control over the populace, by smothering dissent and enforcing Pax Britannica across the Indian subcontinent through often violent policing methods.

It may come as no surprise that, similar to many of its institutions, Pakistan's policing system has had a hard time shedding its colonial legacy. It has proved resistant to any meaningful reform, despite numerous attempts over the decades to overhaul and revamp its structure befitting a modern democratic state. It is favourable for the ruling elite to preserve the anachronistic structure of the Police Service of Pakistan that remains at the mercy of resource constraints and arbitrary political influence.

The use of torture to extract confessions and punish suspects is an everyday reality that many Pakistanis will face when in conflict with the law, depending on their class, gender and political affiliation. This is to be somewhat expected, given the lack of any meaningful forensic investigative capabilities and limited institutional accountability under the law. Deep-rooted systemic flaws have birthed an unfortunate culture of impunity; one which the half-measures taken in the past will not eradicate.

Research by Justice Project Pakistan into instances of torture by Faisalabad police in 2014 unveiled conclusive signs of torture in 1,426 out of 1,867 medico-legal certificates. When the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) launched an inquiry based on this research in 2018, they found that none of the officers responsible had been dismissed, and in some cases, had even received promotions.

In November 2022, Pakistan passed the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act. This historic development was a para-

digim shift, an unprecedented step towards concrete, human-rights based police reform. Over a year later, however, the Act has not been implemented. It is unclear whether there have been any investigations or prosecutions, given the absence of clear rules that operationalise the Act and define the roles and responsibilities of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the NCHR (which have been given investigatory powers under the Act).

We no longer exist as a colonial subject that must be made to walk in line with a lathi over our heads. Both Pakistan's citizens and its police force deserve to exist in a system that is founded on mutual trust and respect, not fear. What is needed more than ever are rules under the Act, which devise a system for independent investigation of incidents of police torture and an accessible complaint mechanism for the public. The government must allocate sufficient resources to, and build the capacity of, the FIA and the NCHR, and spread awareness among the general public about their rights and protections under the new legislation.

It is not this writer's intention to point any fingers at individual police officers or paint the entire force with one brush. Rather, the Rawalpindi incidents have underscored the need to change the way we police our society. Accountability is paramount if there is to be any trust between the people and their watchmen. It is about time CPO Hamdani's commendable measures became an institutionalised, legal norm. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Facing the Shadow

### Zarrar Khuuro

It has been over five months since Israel's genocidal war on Gaza and the Palestinian people began. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been massacred, and hundreds more die daily. Millions are homeless and at risk of death from starvation, exhaustion and disease. Every day, we hear of more horrors and there is no end in sight. There are sights that we can never un-see, images that have seared themselves in our minds — children reduced to skin and bones, people crushed flat under tanks.

Across the world, and in particular in the same Western capitals that bankroll this war and provide diplomatic cover for Israel, we have seen millions pour out onto the streets calling for a ceasefire and for a free Palestine. The actions taken have been many and varied. Pro-Israel businesses have been boycotted, and weapons manufacturers sending arms to Israel blocked.

But what 25-year-old Aaron Bushnell — an active-duty member of the US Air Force and a resident of San Antonio, Texas — did was something else entirely. He recorded himself walking up to the gate of the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C. — dressed in full combat fatigues — and saying that he would not be complicit in the genocide supported by his country's government. He then poured petrol over himself and set himself on fire. With his dying breath, he screamed, "Free Palestine".

The morning before this act, he wrote on Facebook, "Many of us like to ask ourselves, 'What would I do if I was alive during slavery? Or the Jim Crow South? Or apartheid? What would I do if my country was

committing genocide?' The answer is, you're doing it. Right now."

This wasn't the first such attempt to draw attention to Palestine. In December last year, a protester set themselves on fire outside the Israeli consulate in Atlanta, Georgia, surviving with severe burns. However, there has been no follow-up on the story. We don't even know the protester's name or how they are because this story, like so many others that go against the prevailing pro-Israel narrative in the Western media, was buried.

Bushnell's actions bring to mind others who have given their lives in protest for a cause they believed in, or against an action they could not bring themselves to commit. People like Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian Roman Catholic, who refused to serve in the Nazi army in World War II, saying it was against his moral and religious beliefs. Despite being sentenced to death, he refused to serve the genocidal regime that ruled him and was executed. Like Bushnell, he gave his life for a cause he believed in.

Bushnell also reminds us of Thich Quang Duc, a Buddhist monk who set himself on fire in 1963 in protest against the anti-Buddhist policies of the South Vietnamese government. His picture made history, and the man who took the picture, Malcolm Browne won the World Press Photo of the Year.

No less a person than John F. Kennedy said of the photograph, "No news picture in history has generated so much emotion around the world as that one." Will Bushnell's picture be treated the same way? Certainly not by the Western media. On the day of his death, no Western media network even both-

ered to write in the headline which cause he had died for. NPR went a step further, saying that they could not 'verify' Bushnell's motives, despite him having quite literally spelled them out on camera. Newsweek's headline ran: "Bushnell death report reveals police call about 'mental distress'." The headline implies Bushnell had previously suffered from 'mental distress', inviting the reader to think of him as unstable and un-ba-lanced, but if you read the article, you find that the 'police call' in question is about him setting himself on fire.

Then there's the Washington Post, that hallowed torch-bearer of American 'journalism', whose headline reads: "Airman who set himself on fire grew up in religious compound, had anarchist past." What they do not tell you, however, is that the religious compound was that of the Church of the Transfiguration — a twisted pro-Israel, Christian Zionist cult that his own parents were members of. It was this indoctrination that Bushnell rebelled against but the headline makes it seem as though Bushnell was the fanatic.

As for 'anarchist', the term conjures up images of nihilistic terrorism in most minds but what Bushnell espoused was a life-affirming ideology; he spent hours every week helping homeless persons and marginalised communities, who are now paying tribute to this great man. Will the spark he lit take hold? Will his sacrifice go in vain? We do not know. But we do know that Bushnell, like myself and many others, was a huge fan of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. It is perhaps fitting, then, that he gave his life fighting the Shadow that threatens to consume us all. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Maryam approves transport projects featuring 20,000 e-bikes, 657 eco-friendly buses

*Orders reduction in housing installments for low-income groups*

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has given in-principle approval for the implementation of two major transport projects in Punjab, including 20,000 electric bikes and 657 eco-friendly urban buses.

She directed the preparation of a school bus project for girl students in every tehsil of Punjab.

Chairing a meeting here on Monday, CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif reviewed the progress of the transport projects aimed at enhancing citizens' convenience. She emphasized the government's responsibility to alleviate people's hardships, particularly economic challenges, which the government is committed to addressing.

During the briefing, it was revealed that the first phase of the project will introduce diesel hybrid regenerated buses in cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, and Bahawalpur. The bike project is set to launch on May 9, with deliveries beginning the same month.

Additionally, Maryam Nawaz Sharif approved a plan to provide 657 buses for improved transportation facilities in major cities and directed the transport minister to oversee the project's execution.

The meeting was attended by Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, former senator Pervaiz Rasheed, Punjab Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Transport Minister Bilal

Akbar Khan, MPA Sania Ashiq, Chief Secretary, Chairman P&D, Secretary Transport, Secretary Finance, President Bank of Punjab, CEO of Punjab Transport Company, MD of Punjab Mass Transit Authority, and other officers concerned.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has instructed to reduce housing installments for low-income individuals and set a deadline for marking land for housing construction in districts.

Chairing a meeting to review progress on 100,000 houses project here on Monday, the CM ordered measures to lower the overall cost of housing.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif emphasized her commitment to ensuring no citizen in Punjab remains homeless.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif presides over the meeting to review Transport Projects to facilitate people of Punjab.

## Governor Punjab greets Kyrgyz Honorary Consul

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman on Monday felicitated prominent businessman Meher Kashif Younis on his appointment as the honorary Consul of Kyrgyzstan in Lahore, including the territory of Punjab province.

He termed it as a recognition of remarkable achievements of Meher Kashif and his dedication to foster international trade relations. He also appreciated his commitment to serving as a bridge between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The governor emphasized the significance of such appointments in enhancing Pakistan's global outreach and promoting economic growth through

collaboration with other countries. He hoped, as an honorary Consul, Meher Kashif Younis would play a pivotal role in strengthening bilateral ties, promoting trade, and facilitating cultural exchanges between the two countries, besides exchange of higher education delegations.

Meher's appointment signifies a testament to his expertise, leadership, and contribution to the business community, reflecting positively on Pakistan's diplomatic endeavors, he remarked.

The governor wished him success in further enhancing the relationship between two countries for mutual prosperity and development, and also to live up to the aspirations of the business community of either sides.

## CM KP decides to include seminaries in solarization project

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Monday decided to include seminaries (Deeni Madaris) in the project regarding solarization of mosques and worship places in the province.

He directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps for this purpose and to ensure that all the registered seminaries of settled and merged districts are included in the solarization project.

It is inevitable to convert these seminaries to solar energy for facilitating thousands of students studying and residing there. Under this initiative, solarization of 1000 to 1500 seminaries would be carried out across the

province.

He was presiding over a meeting of Energy & Power Department held here at Chief Minister's House.

Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmad and other officials concerned attended the meeting. The meeting was briefed in details about the development projects, administrative and financial affairs and other related matters of the department.

The chief minister has directed the quarters concerned to ensure appointment of Chief Executive Officer and Executive Committee Members of Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) as

soon as possible.

He termed the timely completion of ongoing Hyderabad Power Development Projects as of vital importance and directed the authorities concerned to ensure that the projects are completed within the stipulated timelines.

He further directed them to fix the priorities in this regard and added that revenue generating projects be funded on priority basis.

Meanwhile, chairing a meeting of the Local Government Department, the Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to release special funds for the payment of salaries and pensions to the employees of financially weak Tehsil Municipal Administrations.



FAISALABAD: A large number of women are waiting for registration at Saalimi Chowk Al Fateh Sports Complex to get the Ramadan package.

## Complete shutter down strike observed against kidnapping of Kumar

**By Tanveer Ahmed**  
MIRPUR MATHELO: Retik Kumar, a Hindu youth of Mirpur Mathelo, who was kidnapped a month ago, could not be recovered, complete shutter down strike in Mirpur Mathelo, shouting slogans against the government and Ghotki administration.

According to details, Hindu youth Retik Kumar a month ago He was kidnapped by the robbers, which is still in the clutches of the robbers, a strike was held on the appeal of various political and social organizations of Mirpur Mathelo. Faqeer Ramzan Kalwar, Kamal Mahar, Mir Hasan Lashari, Akram Metlo and other leaders demanded the recovery of Retik Kumar and other hostages and raised slogans against the government and the Ghotki administration, while Mirpur Mathelo Bar boycotted the court proceedings in this regard.

On the other hand, the recovery of Hindu youth

Retik Kumar and the increasing incidents of kidnapping for ransom in Ghotki district continued in front of the office of SSP Ghotki for the eighth day. Led by lawyers.

A dharna was held in front of the SSP office by protesting on behalf of the business community including journalists and civil society. On this occasion, Nasrullah Gadani, Abdul Majeed Jalbani, Hanif Soomro, Darshan Lal, and other leaders said that the unrest in the district has reached its peak, instead of controlling the unrest, it is shown by the instructions to the citizens to shorten the transportation after evening. It happens that the state has failed to control law and order.

He further said that after the kidnapping of Retik Kumar and other hostages, panic has spread throughout the district due to which commercial activities have been suspended.



KARACHI: People sit near their ration bags given by UMR United Mission by Relief Development during a ceremony of Holy month of Ramadan.

## Minister visits PTC office, reviews operational affairs

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan conducted a visit to the Punjab Transport Company (PTC) head office here on Monday.

Transport Secretary Dr Javed Ahmed Qazi warmly welcomed the minister on his arrival.

Accompanied by Chairman Board of Directors Rais Abbas Zaidi, the minister inspected various sectors of the Punjab Transport Company.

Later, the minister also presided over a meeting where the in-charges of various departments gave a detailed briefing to the minister about their working, CEO Farrukh Abbas briefed about the

Enforcement Wing and Route Permit.

The minister while issuing orders to improve the driving system, saying that records should be fully computerized as soon as possible, adding that the performance of public transport should be improved in other cities of Punjab, while a modern plan should be adopted to improve the quality of service delivery.

Bilal Akbar Khan said that for better results in office affairs, the staff and officers should be provided all available resources, however, day-to-day performance of all sectors has to be further improved. He emphasized that the information technology has to be utilized, saying that the Punjab government.

## Blood camp held at SNGPL office

SARGODHA (APP): A blood donation camp was organized with the collaboration of the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited and Ali Zeb Foundation here on Monday.

According to a press release issued by SNGPL office, the camp was held at the regional office under the supervision of Regional Manager Sargodha Region Binyameen Shahid.

Senior Engineer Hassan Raza Kazmi, Executive Engineer Usman Rashid, Executive Engineer Adnan Haider, Executive Engineer Farasat Ali, Senior Officer Umair Ali, Engineer Faheem Sultan, officers and employees donated blood.

The primary purpose of the camp was to maintain a blood reserve for patients suffering from diseases like Thalassemia, Hemophilia, and Leukemia, to meet their blood requirements. Speaking at the media, Regional Manager Sui Gas Binyameen Shahid said that the organization of the camp was a part of the policy of Sui Gas employees to play a role in improving health, education and environment of society. He said that all employees, including the officers, showed deep interest and enthusiasm in making the blood bank a success.

The employees would continue to perform their departmental duties while also serving for welfare and betterment of the society, he added.

## 38 arrested, 54 cases registered over profiteering

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider intensified price control measures following the Chief Minister's directives and arrested 38 individuals besides registering 54 cases against them during last 24 hours in the city.

In an effort to ensure the sale of essential commodities at prescribed rates, stringent monitoring underway across the city and Price Control Magistrates were conducting rigorous operations.

The officers checked 1872 locations and found 138 violations within the last 24 hours, as confirmed by DC Lahore, Rafia Haider and added that fines totaling Rs 140000 imposed while 4 locations sealed due to severe violations.

## Minister chairs meeting of health deptt; seeks details of Sehat card

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for health Qasim Ali Shah on Monday chaired the meeting of the department after assuming charge of the Minister office.

Upon the arrival, the Minister was welcomed by the Secretary and the DGs and heads of different programmes.

An introductory session was held with the staff of the Health Department.

Secretary Health Mehmood Aslam Wazir presented a detailed review

of the health department, an overview of all ongoing development projects and the current situation in the health department.

The Minister was also briefed about health card, ten MTIs and other independent institutions.

The health minister was told that the budget of the health department has exceeded Rs 207 billion, adding that more than Rs 88 billion have been spent so far under the heads of electricity and development projects.

The Minister sought details of Health Card Plus.



LAHORE: Secretary Punjab Assembly Chaudhary Amir Habib briefing Ambassador of Austria to Pakistan Mrs. Andrea Wicke during her visit to Punjab Assembly.

## Mayor says: Karachi Institute of Child Health to be set up for treatment of children

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab Monday said that the Karachi Institute of Child Health will be established for the treatment of children in the city, with its headquarters in Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH) while the satellite centers of this institute will be established throughout the city.

He expressed these views while talking to media representatives after inaugurating Gynecology Ward, Children's Nursery and ICU in ASH.

He said that reconstruction of gynecology ward in ASH is encouraging, more improvements will be made in the hospital, Spencer

Eye Hospital which was closed, has been made functional after a period of time, five successful cataract operations were performed in the hospital yesterday.

On this occasion Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, Municipal Commissioner SM Afzal Zaidi, Mayor Karachi Spokesperson for Political Affairs Karamullah Waqasi, Deputy Parliamentary Leader Dil Muhammad, DG SRB Asghar Kanasra, DG Rescue Dr. Abid Sheikh and local leaders of PPP were also present.

The Mayor Karachi said that a biometric system will be installed to ensure attendance at ASH.



PESHAWAR: Chairman BISEP Professor Nasrullah Khan and PMDCs Director Colleges Muhammad Sohail in a group photo along with position holders during Science and Art Exhibition of Peshawar Model Degree Colleges.

## KP CM sets up complaint cell

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur has established a complaint cell at CM Secretariat to address public issues.

According to CM Secretariat special staff has been deputed at the cell to receive complains, CM Secretariats on contact numbers: 091-9222461 or 091-9222464.

As per the directives of the CM, immediate action would be taken on citizens' complaints.

## CM extends Ramadan greetings

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has extended Ramadan greetings to the people, emphasizing the significance of the blessed hours of Ramadan as a blessing from Allah Almighty.

In her message, she urged everyone to remember the deprived and needy during this holy month and encouraged the affluent to share their blessings with the less fortunate for the pleasure of Allah Almighty.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif also highlighted the importance of remembering oppressed Kashmiri and Palestinian brothers and sisters during Ramadan. She emphasized that fasting is not only a form of worship but also a means of training in moral discipline.

Under the "Nighaban Ramadan Package," food items are being provided to 32.5 million beneficiaries at their doorsteps, she added.

## Riphah invites applications for faculty recruitment

FAISALABAD (APP): Riphah International University has invited applications for faculty recruitment at its Faisalabad campus.

University spokesman said here on Monday that the Riphah University would recruit professors, associate professors, assistant professors and lecturers in medical ultrasound technology, dental technology, operation theater technology, neurophysiology technology, optometry & orthoptics, aesthetic & cosmetics technology, project management, biomedical engineering, architecture, education, nursing, pharmacy, anesthesia technology, cardiology, DVM, poultry, engineering management, public health, management science, sports science & physical education, medical imaging technology.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal Sohail Shokat Butt addressing during his visit to Dar-ul-Amaan Shelter Homes.

## CM Maryam has zero tolerance policy towards violence against Women: Uzma

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab Information Minister Uzma Bukhari Monday said that the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif will adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards gender based violence and that the government under her leadership has launched "Never Again" app aimed at enhancing women's safety.

Talking to a private news channel, she said that violence on women is a horrendous crime and strict action will be taken against the people involved in violence against women.

She said CM recognizes the important role women play in the development of society and growth of the nation.

She said on the chief minister's dedication to women's safety, stating

the "Never Again" app would be a crucial tool in monitoring and addressing women's rights and security concerns.

Maryam Nawaz, the first female Chief Minister in the country's history, is deeply committed to safeguarding the rights of women, she said.

Replying to a query, she said that Punjab government will constitute special women desk in all police stations to facilitate them, adding, a proper mechanism was being implementing in the province for the protection of women.

She said that CM Punjab will herself monitor the women related app, adding, all those who use smartphones should download it to stay connected with the police in case of emergency.



KARACHI: Senior journalist Mazhar Abbas speaking at a reference in memory of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Workers President, Pervaiz Shaukat at Karachi Press Club.

## SEPA emergency meeting discusses measures for safe disposal practices

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) convened an emergency meeting on Monday to review and enhance the safe disposal practices for hazardous waste in the city.

The meeting was presided over by the Director General SEPA, Naem Ahmed Mughal and attended by representatives from six leading incineration companies operating in Karachi.

In his opening remarks, DG SEPA emphasized the need for an

efficient disposal mechanism for hazardous waste material at incinerator plants, ensuring environmental safety and public health.

He further said that those involved in unsafe practices for hazardous waste disposal shall be dealt with iron hands. Also, fake incineration service providers will not be spared from strict legal action. Moreover, he added, if any staff of SEPA found involved in supporting unsafe practices of hazardous waste disposal shall be placed under suspension.

## China, Pakistan enjoy great potential in marine energy exploration: NPC Deputy

BEIJING (APP): China and Pakistan can engage in more comprehensive cooperation on joint marine energy exploration and development, and strengthen the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, said Yan Hongtao, a deputy to the National People's Congress and the general manager of China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) Tianjin.

As the pioneer of offshore oil and gas resource exploration in

China, CNOOC has actively participated in the construction of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". In a bid to enhance bilateral friendly cooperation in science, it also took part in the 91-day China-Pakistan joint marine geological survey in the Indian Ocean starting from December 2019.

During the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2023, the two heads of state hope that both sides will seize the 10th

anniversary of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as an opportunity to develop an "upgraded version" of the corridor focusing on growth, livelihood, innovation, greenness and openness. They aim to enhance cooperation in areas such as industrial parks, agriculture, mining, and new energy, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. Under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) framework, if we continue to conduct geological

surveys and research in Pakistani waters, we will undoubtedly establish a robust data foundation for delineating potential oil and gas areas, selecting favorable zones, evaluating resources, and analyzing the oil and gas potential in this region. It will promote our all-weather strategic cooperative partnership to a new level," said Yan.

Firstly, Yan suggested to promote China-Pakistan joint energy exploration and development cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding petroleum sector in Federal Capital.



Member (Power) WAPDA Jamil Akhtar watching various equipments of Power plants during his visit to Hydel Museum.

## Minister Agriculture for responsible role of officers to develop agriculture sector

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Minister for Agriculture Muhammad Sajjad Monday said that the agriculture sector is very important and to make the province self-sufficient in agriculture and increase agricultural production urging all the officers of the department to play an active role in this regard.

He further said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa soil is very fertile and there was a vital need that we should pay special attention to the agricultural sector.

He expressed these views while presiding over an introductory meeting with the officers of Agriculture department.

Secretary Agriculture Javed Marwat, DGs of all wings of the department and relevant officers were also present on this occasion.

The provincial minister said that Officers should use their skills to adopt a comprehensive strategy to make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa self-sufficient in wheat crops and agricultural scientists should also use their experiences in this regard.

He further added that the vision Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur is to make the country and the province economically self-sufficient by developing the agriculture sector.

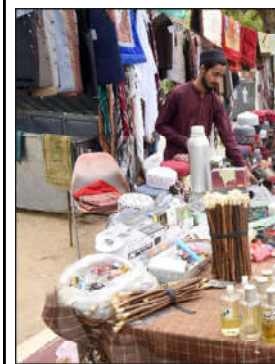
Keeping in mind, he said officers should make plans and arranged and perform their responsibilities honestly and efficiently so that the efficiency of the department could be improved and the problems of the landholders be solved. He further added that all decisions will be made on the basis of merit and transparency.

## WAPDA establishes Hydel museum at Tarbela

ISLAMABAD (APP): WAPDA has established the Hydel Museum at Tarbela 4th Extension Hydel Power Station comprising equipment of hydropower plants, aimed at preserving and portraying the tremendous heritage of WAPDA hydel power stations.

The vintage electro-mechanical equipment and parts of Jabban, Warsak, Tarbela, Renala, Kurrum Garhi and Chitral hydel power stations have been showcased in the museum, said a press release.

Besides, the model of Jabban Hydel Power Station (1937) and the structural model of Tarbela



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranges his stall outside a mosque selling prayer skull caps, miswak, teeth cleaning twig and other items in Federal Capital.

## Zong 4G introduces emergency pack for prepaid users with low balance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G Pakistan's leading telecom operator ensures that users get unlimited connectivity despite having low balance with its newest value-added service, Zong Emergency Pack.

Acknowledging the daily challenges faced by its users, and the critical role of seamless communication as an indispensable service, Zong 4G strives to offer uninterrupted connectivity capabilities to its prepaid users, especially in times of emergency, said a news release.

This initiative reflects Zong 4G's struggle to maintain top-notch and seamless communication services for its users.



ISLAMABAD: Woman purchasing spices for upcoming Holy Month of Ramadan.

## Unlocking carbon markets potential crucial to achieve green transition goal: experts

KARACHI (Online): Incentives and conducive regulations can help industries adopt low carbon emission technologies and aid in scaling up the goal of climate action, said Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

He was speaking at a workshop on "Unlocking Carbon Markets through Private Sector Engagement: Bankability and Equitable Development". The workshop was jointly organized by SDPI and Embassy of Denmark, here.

Dr Abid Suleri suggested devising Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) policies, considering their positive impact on local industries as seen in EU

## Agriculture infrastructure handover ceremony held in district Mohmand

### Independent Report

PESHAWAR: The USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) on Monday formally handed over nine completed agriculture infrastructure schemes to the farming communities of tehsil Safi and Ambar, District Mohmand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

The ceremony was attended by representatives from USAID-ERDA, the local government, and

community members. These interventions irrigating 200 acres of barren land in tehsil Ambar and Safi of Mohmand District, will significantly improve the agricultural productivity of the region.

USAID-ERDA provided vegetable and maize seeds to the farmers communities of tehsil Safi and Ambar, District Mohmand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

The ceremony was attended by representatives from USAID-ERDA, the local government, and

the Government of Pakistan deeply appreciates the continued support of USAID-ERDA in developing our communities. These infrastructure projects will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of the farmers in Mohmand District. This project is a game-changer for our community, he said.

He said, the improved watercourses and storage tanks will allow us to cultivate our land more efficiently and increase our yields.

### Advisory for wheat growers

FAISALABAD (APP): An agriculture expert has advised the wheat growers to apply water to the crop at the milky stage of grain formation while keeping in view the weather conditions.

Deputy Director Agriculture (Extension) Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood while addressing farmers at Chak 195/R-B, said that it is the time of grain formation in the crop, if water is not given at this stage, the grain size will be small and the yield will decrease.

He further asked them to keep the wheat cultivated field wet to protect the crop from the effects of hot weather.

He further advised them to save the crop from insect (Tela) as its attack becomes intense on the wheat crop during the current month.

## Mobilink Bank, BizB partner to empowering women micro-entrepreneurs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mobilink Bank partnered with BizB, a leading marketplace in Pakistan, welcoming the company as a 'Brand Ambassador Organization', to drive financial inclusion and bolster women micro-entrepreneurs nationwide.

This symbiotic partnership strives to offer easily accessible financial services and support the endeavours of female entrepreneurs in the growing e-commerce landscape, said a news release.

Through this partnership, women micro-entrepreneurs under BizB's W-Empower will not only have access to a platform for buying and selling preloved apparel

but will also enjoy the full range of features provided by the Dost App, ensuring smooth and convenient transactions.

Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and digital services to nearly 160 million customers in six dynamic markets that are home to 7% of the world's population.

BizB revolutionizes Pakistan's fashion industry with sustainable practices, offering preloved clothing to empower urban women economically and environmentally, fostering community and reshaping fashion consumption for a conscious, inclusive future.



LAHORE: Chairman Railway Mazhar Ali Shah presides over the meeting regarding Development Projects.

## Gold rates stay constant at Rs230,200

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold in the local market remained constant Rs230,200 on Monday, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 gram 22 karat gold also remained unchanged at Rs197,360 and Rs180,913 respectively. The price of per tola and ten gram silver witnessed no change and was traded at Rs2,600 and Rs2,229.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market was sold at \$2,198, the Association reported.

## Most markets fall after strong US data, eyes on inflation

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Stock markets mostly fell Monday after a forecast-busting jobs report dampened US interest rate cut hopes, with attention now turning to the release of key inflation data this week.

The selling followed a retreat in all three main indexes on Wall Street, while investors lowered their expectations for how many cuts the Federal Reserve would make this year.

However, analysts said that while the jobs figures were bigger than hoped, they would not likely cause policymakers

to hold off lowering borrowing costs as unemployment ticked up to a two-year high.

The reading "didn't necessarily amount to an 'all-clear' signal for the Fed, but there also didn't appear to be anything in it that would derail its plan to cut rates", said Chris Larkin of E\*Trade from Morgan Stanley.

SPi Asset Management's Stephen Innes added that "the US labour market seems to be in a comfortable zone—not too hot and not too cold". "Reminiscent of Goldilocks's 'just right' porridge."

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Seven ships, Eagle, Crested Eagle, Yongheng Ocean, Madison Eagle, Ullswater, Houyoushi Park and CMA CGM Nabucco scheduled to load/offload Rice, Steel coil, Palm oil, LPG, Chemicals and Containers, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal, HF Terminal, Engro Terminal and Container Terminal respectively on Sunday.

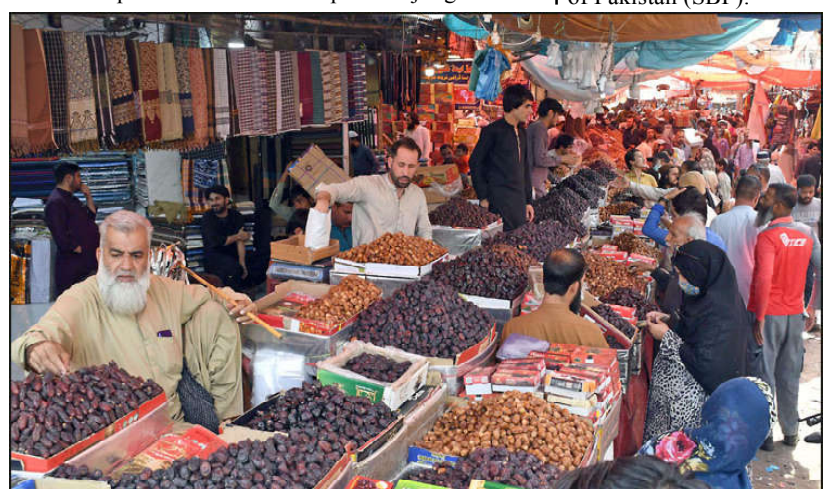
Meanwhile another ship, 'Menomonee' carrying Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on Monday morning.

## CCRI suggests measures to get bumper cotton crop

MULTAN (APP): Director Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI) Dr. Muhammad Naveed Afzal said that selection of suitable land for cotton cultivation was very much important to achieve maximum yield. In a statement issued here, he observed, the fertile land, which efficiently absorbs water and maintains moisture for extended periods, is ideal for cotton cultivation. Dr. Afzal

stressed that not all types of land, such as clayey, sandy, or saline, are suitable for cotton cultivation, but with the expert advice of agricultural specialists, cotton can be grown on ridges within such lands.

Dr. Afzal advocated for the use of laser land levelers to ensure uniformity in land surface as the laser levelers facilitate easy water flow and provide consistent irrigation to all crops.



Pakistani people buy their needs ahead of Muslims' holy month of Ramadan at shopping centers, in which are crowded due to Ramadan preparations in Karachi.

# Putin hopes a Trump win would change course for Russia On Russian TV ahead of the election, there's only one program: Putin's

### Russia's spy service accuses US of trying to meddle in presidential election

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: Thousands of Russians braved the cold for hours earlier this month to honor the opposition politician Alexei Navalny after his funeral. They chanted anti-war slogans and covered his gravesite with so many flowers that it disappeared from view. It was one of the largest displays of defiance against President Vladimir Putin since he invaded Ukraine, and happened just weeks before an election he is all but assured to win. But Russians watching television saw none of it.

A leading state television channel opened with its show trailing against the West and NATO. Another channel led with a segment extolling the virtues of domestically built streetcars. And there was the usual deferential coverage of Putin. Since coming to power almost 25 years ago, Putin has eliminated nearly all independent media and opposition voices in Russia — a process he ramped up after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin's control over media is now absolute.

President Vladimir Putin has no doubt he will secure another term in Russia's election. The vote that leaves him in suspense, and could do more to change his policies, will occur eight months later in the United States.

Putin has publicly said he prefers US President Joe

Biden to his predecessor and aspiring successor Donald Trump, a remark widely interpreted to mean exactly the opposite, as the former KGB man hopes his notoriety will boost the Republican mogul. Trump has voiced admiration for Putin, raged against NATO, the alliance founded to defend against Moscow, and boasted that he within one day would end the war in Ukraine, which Russia invaded two years ago. Trump supporters in Congress, seizing on an unrelated dispute over migration, have held up approval of \$60 billion in military aid for Ukraine, whose troops have faced the first battlefield setbacks in months as ammunition runs scarce.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gestures as he attends a press conference on the day of a flag-raising ceremony at NATO headquarters following the accession of Sweden to the alliance, in Brussels, Belgium.

# China trying to 'normalise' military drills near Taiwan, island's top security official says

**Monitoring Desk**  
TAIPEI: Taiwan's top security official told parliament on Monday that China runs "joint combat readiness patrols" near the democratic island every 7-10 days on average, saying Chinese forces were trying to "normalise" drills near Taiwan. China has in recent years stepped up military activities near Taiwan, with almost daily incursions into the island's air defence identification zones and regular "combat readiness patrols" that included drills by its

air and naval forces.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, over the island's strong objections.

Taiwan National Security Bureau Director-General Tsai Ming-yen said Beijing usually dispatches around 10 warplanes and 3 to 4 naval ships on joint patrols near Taiwan, calling them part of a "multi-front" effort that also includes economic coercion and misinformation campaign to pressure the island.

"They are trying to normalise their military activities," Tsai said, adding that the patrols were occasionally timed to coincide with diplomatic events such as visits to the island by foreign lawmakers.

Tsai said that Taipei had "close discussions" with international allies on whether a Chinese invasion is imminent and that tensions across the Taiwan Strait have not escalated sharply. "We do not see any signal of a war in the Taiwan Strait breaking out," Tsai said.

# US military airlifts embassy personnel from Haiti, bolsters security

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The US military said on Sunday it has carried out an operation in Haiti to airlift non-essential embassy personnel from the country and added US forces to bolster embassy security, as the Caribbean nation reels under a state of emergency.

The operation was the latest sign of Haiti's troubles as gang violence threatens to bring down the government and has led thousands to flee their homes.

"This airlift of personnel into and out of the embassy is consistent with our standard practice for embassy security augmentation worldwide, and no Haitians were on board the military aircraft," the US military's Southern Command said in a statement.

The European Union's delegation in Haiti has temporarily closed its offices and reduced its presence in the country to the minimum, according to a post on social media X, citing security concerns.

# Military aircraft from 5 countries drop aid over Gaza

**Monitoring Desk**  
AMMAN: Military planes parachuted aid over Gaza on Sunday, an AFP photographer said, the latest airdrop over the besieged territory's north where famine looms more than five months into the Israel-Hamas war. The photographer, on board a Jordanian military plane, saw hundreds of Palestinians rushing to receive the falling pallets of basic supplies. The Jordanian army said in a statement that US, French, Belgian and Egyptian planes also participated in the relief operation.



Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi speaks during a joint press conference with Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Vatican Secretary for Relations with States, in Amman, Jordan.

# Blinken will attend an urgent meeting with Caribbean leaders as Haiti's violent crisis grows

**Monitoring Desk**  
KINGSTON: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to meet Monday with Caribbean leaders in Jamaica as part of an urgent push to solve Haiti's spiraling crisis, while pressure grows on Prime Minister Ariel Henry to resign or agree to a transitional council. Henry, locked out of his own country after surging violence at home, is expected to attend the closed-door meeting. It was organized by members of a regional trade bloc known as Caricom who for months have pressed for a transitional government in Haiti as protests demanded Henry's resignation.

"The international community must work together with Haitians towards a peaceful political transition," U.S. Assistant Secretary for Western

Hemisphere Affairs Brian Nichols wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Nichols will attend the meeting.

But concerns remain that a long-awaited solution might not be found. "Whilst we are making considerable progress, the stakeholders are not yet where they need to be," Caricom said in a statement Friday announcing the urgent meeting in Jamaica. Attacks by powerful gangs on key government targets began Feb. 29 across Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. Gunmen have burned police stations, closed the main international airports and raided the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

Scores of people have been killed, and more than 15,000 people are homeless after fleeing neighborhoods raided by gangs.

# Hopes of Ramadan truce for Gaza all but dashed

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA STRIP: Deadly fighting rages on in Gaza, with no truce in sight on the eve of holy month of Ramadan and a dire humanitarian crisis gripping the besieged Palestinian territory. Egypt said on Sunday it was in contact with senior Hamas and Israeli figures, as well as other mediators, in an effort to restart negotiations for a truce, two Egyptian security sources told Reuters.

Egypt's contacts with Hamas and Israeli intelligence agency Mossad on Sunday were carried out under a mandate from the Egyptian presidency in an effort to bring the two sides' divergent positions together, the sources said, without providing further details.

# India moves before election to implement citizenship law opposed by Muslims

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: India announced rules on Monday to implement a 2019 citizenship law that critics call anti-Muslim, weeks before Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks a rare third term for his Hindu nationalist government.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) grants Indian nationality to Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who fled to Hindu-majority India from Muslim-majority Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before December 31, 2014.

Modi's government had not crafted implementation rules for the law after protests and sectarian violence broke out in New Delhi and elsewhere within weeks of the law's December 2019 enactment. Scores were killed and hundreds injured during days of clashes.

# Democratic protest vote movement over the Israel-Hamas war spreads from Michigan to other states

**Monitoring Desk**  
LANSING: The protest vote movement over President Joe Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war has spread to several states and raised more questions about whether a small but significant number of Democrats angry at Biden might abandon him in November.

A week after 101,000 Michigan voters chose "uncommitted" on their ballots, so did roughly 263,000 voters in the five Super Tuesday states where similar ballot options were available. Minnesota, which had the most organized effort outside of Michigan, saw 1 in 5 Democratic voters mark the "uncommitted" option, a higher percentage than the 13% who voted uncommitted in Michigan. Organizers are watching the state of Washington's primary on Tuesday to see how many voters select "uncommitted." And a "Leave It Blank"

campaign has formed for Georgia's Tuesday primary that's intended to have the same effect, as is a "unstructured" vote in Wisconsin's April 2 primary. Supporters of the protest argue anger over the war could endanger Biden's chances in swing states like Michigan against former President Donald Trump in their likely rematch. Biden's allies believe disaffected Democrats will return to the president's fold when faced with a choice between him and Trump, who the president's campaign has argued is a threat to democracy and is planning a sweeping set of policy changes that would attack liberal priorities.

While the reasons for voters favoring unpledged delegates over Biden may differ, the choice has been increasingly pushed as a protest vote against Biden's handling of the conflict in Gaza.



Portugal's Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Democratic Alliance (AD) leader Luis Montenegro speaks following the result of a general election in Lisbon, Portugal.

# Visa freeze on aid workers compounds Gaza woes

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: Along with cumbersome border checks and relentless Israeli bombardment, the humanitarian response in war-ravaged Gaza faces a new challenge: a de facto freeze on visas for many international aid workers.

Israeli authorities have stopped issuing new visas or renewing old ones for foreign employees of international NGOs, most of whom occupy senior positions, according to three senior humanitarian officials and a body representing more than 80

# English just 'badly pronounced French', claims academic

**Monitoring Desk**  
PARIS: French linguist Bernard Cerquiglini would like to send a copy of his new book, "The English language doesn't exist: it's badly pronounced French", to King Charles III.

Rather than aiming to make the monarch sputter into his morning tea, "it's a book written from a humorous perspective, it's deliberately in bad faith, arrogant, chauvinistic and so on," Cerquiglini said.

# Turkish police detain 33 people accused of plotting attacks ahead of local elections, official says

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISTANBUL: Turkish police detained 33 people suspected of ties to the Islamic State group who were allegedly preparing attacks ahead of the country's local elections later this month, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said Sunday.

The suspects were "preparing and searching for action before the upcoming local elections," he posted on X, formerly Twitter. Nationwide elections are due to be held on March 31.

Counter-terrorism police in Sakarya in northwest Turkey recovered weapons, cash and "organizational documents" during raids.

"We will not tolerate any terrorists. We will continue our fight uninterrupted with the superior efforts of our security forces," Yerlikaya said.

The network was providing personnel for war zones and financial support for IS while operating from illegal mosques and religious schools, he said.

Turkey has suffered numerous attacks linked to IS over the last 10 years, including a gun attack on a church in Istanbul in January that left one man dead.

# India conducts first flight test of MIRV domestic missile

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: India successfully conducted the first flight test of a domestically developed missile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology, India Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on messaging platform X on Monday.

Indian scientists have integrated the technology — which delivers multiple warheads to different targets fired from the same missile on the Agni-V platform — and is the latest in India's nuclear-capable Agni missile series.

# Palestinians prepare for Ramazan in the shadow of Gaza war

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: Palestinians prepared for Ramazan in a sombre mood with heightened security measures by Israeli police and the spectre of war and hunger in Gaza overshadowing the normally festive Muslim holy month as talks to secure a ceasefire stalled.

Thousands of police have been deployed around the narrow streets of the Old City in Jerusalem, where tens of thousands of worshippers are expected every day at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, one of the holiest sites in Islam.

The area, considered the most sacred place by Jews who know it as Temple Mount, has been a longstanding flashpoint for trouble and was one of the starting points of the last

war in 2021 between Israel and Hamas, the militant movement that controls Gaza.

That 10-day conflict has been dwarfed by the current war, which is now in its sixth month. It began on Oct 7 when thousands of Hamas fighters stormed into Israel, killing some 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's relentless campaign in Gaza has caused increasing alarm across the world as the growing risk of famine threatens to add to a death toll that has already passed 31,000.

In a Ramazan message to Muslims at home and abroad, US President Joe Biden pledged on Sunday (Mar 10) to continue to push for humanitarian aid to Gaza.

# China's congress ends with a show of unity behind Xi's vision for national greatness

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China's national legislature wrapped up its annual session Monday with the usual show of near-unanimous support for plans designed to carry out ruling Communist Party leader Xi Jinping's vision for the nation.

The weeklong event, replete with meetings carefully scripted to allow no surprises, has highlighted how China's politics have become ever more calibrated to elevate Xi.

Monday's agenda lacked the usual closing news conference by the premier, the party's No. 2 leader. The news conference has been held most years since 1988 and was the one time when journalists could directly question a top Chinese leader.

The party leaders who run the State Council emphasize Premier Li Qiang's relatively weak status. His predecessors played a much larger role in leading key economic policies such as modernizing state companies, coping with economic crises and

leading housing reforms that transformed China into a nation of homeowners.

The nearly 3,000-member National People's Congress approved a revised State Council law that directs China's version of the cabinet to follow Xi's vision. The vote was 2,883 to eight, with nine abstentions. Other measures passed by similarly wide margins. The most nays were recorded for the annual report of the supreme court, which was approved by a 2,834 to 44 vote.

In brief closing remarks, Zhao Leji, the legislature's top official, urged the people to unite more closely under the Communist Party's leadership "with comrade Xi Jinping at its core."

The party leaders who run the State Council used to have a much freer hand in setting economic policy, Neil Thomas, a Chinese politics fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said in an emailed comment.

# S. Korea starts procedures to suspend licences of 4,900 striking doctors

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: South Korea said on Monday it had started procedures to suspend the medical licences of 4,900 junior doctors who have resigned and stopped working to protest government medical training reforms, causing healthcare chaos.

The walkout, which started February 20, is over government plans to sharply increase the number of doctors, which it says is essential to combat shortages and South Korea's rapidly ageing population, while the doctors argue it will erode service quality.

Nearly 12,000 junior doctors — 93 percent of the trainee workforce — were not in their hospitals at the last count, despite government back to work orders and threats of legal action, forcing Seoul to mobilise military medics and millions of dollars in state reserves to help.

The Health Ministry on Monday said it had sent administrative notifications

— the first step to suspending the doctors' medical licences — to thousands of trainee doctors after they defied specific orders telling them to return to their hospitals.

"As of March 8 (notifications) have been sent to more than 4,900 trainee doctors," Chun Byung-wang, director of the health and medical policy division at the health ministry, told reporters.

The government has previously warned striking doctors they face a three month suspension of their licences, a punishment which, it says, will delay by at least a year their ability to qualify as specialists.

Chun urged the striking medics to return to their patients. "The government will take into account the circumstance and protect trainee doctors if they return to work before the administrative measure is complete," he said, indicating doctors who come back to work now could avoid the punishment.

# Several dead in southern France after violent storms flood bridges

**Monitoring Desk**  
PARIS: French rescue workers recovered three bodies on Sunday and were searching for four other people, including two children, after violent storms lashed the southeast of the country, with most believed to have been swept away in cars on flooded bridges.

A family of four, including two children aged four and 13, was caught in the floods Saturday evening while trying to drive across a bridge evening over the river Gardon at Dions village, north of Nimes, the prefecture said.

The father and two children were still missing but the mother, 40, who was also in the car, was found by rescuers and taken to hospital, it said.

The body of another victim was found a few hundred metres from where a car with two Belgian passengers was swept away by the raging waters on Saturday evening in Gagnieres, a

nearly village in the Gard department.

Authorities said the driver had tried to cross a bridge even after it was closed and a police officer had told him not to attempt the passage.

One of the two passengers aboard managed to escape and was later found clinging to a tree for more than two hours before being rescued, the prefecture told AFP.

More than 300 rescue workers were deployed in the Gard department, where two other bodies were recovered Sunday from a car in the village of Goudargues, reportedly of two women aged 47 and 50, who had been heading for Spain.

In the neighbouring Ardeche department, a hydroelectric power station manager who went to check on the facility has also been missing since Saturday evening in the village of Saint Martin de Valamas.



JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS: Personnel board the US Army Vessel General Frank S. Besson from the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) as it departs to Gaza.

## President stresses upon empathy for vulnerable sections of society during Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has stressed upon realizing the plight of poor, orphans, destitute and vulnerable segments of society during the holy month of Ramadan by extending all possible support to them.

He also appealed to the well-to-do and prosperous people to contribute towards this noble cause by giving away Zakat and alms and support these strata of society with financial sup-

port and continue this kind gesture throughout the year.

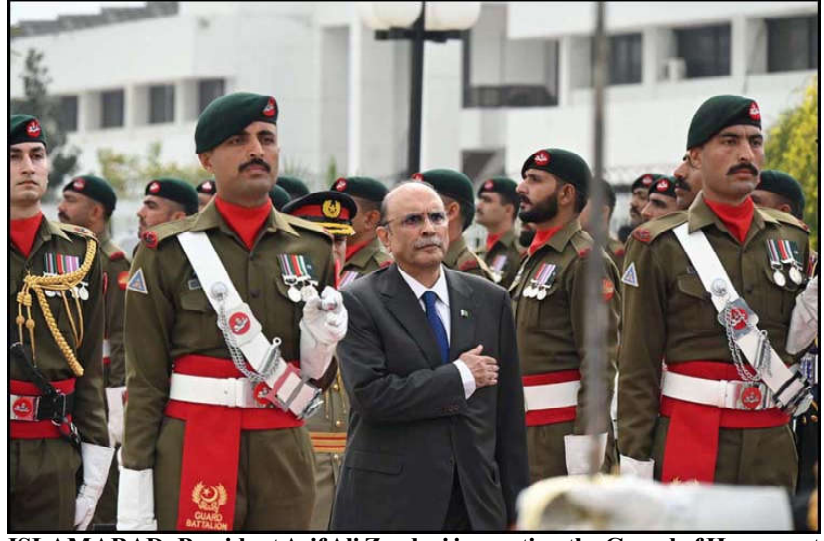
The president, in a message on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan 1445 Hijrah, also urged the international community and the Muslim Ummah to help the oppressed Palestinians and ensure immediate ceasefire and end to their genocide. He observed that the holy month brought with it message of sympathy, affection, sacrifice, brotherhood and coopera-

tion. He also extended his felicitation to the Pakistani nation and the Muslims across the world on the arrival of holy and blessed month, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Monday.

The president observed that the holy month of Ramadan provided them opportunities to realize the real spirit of the holy month. The Muslims follow the commands of Allah Almighty by maintaining



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



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari inspecting the Guard of Honour, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Gwadar Port maintenance dredging navigation channel project completed

GWADAR (INP): Gwadar Port Maintenance Dredging Navigation Channel project was completed, ensuring a depth of 14 meters at the navigational channel of Gwadar Port. Now it is enough to accommodate large ships of more than 50,000 tons and this will further enhance the throughput capacity of Gwadar Port. In this regard a Completion Ceremony for Maintenance Dredging Navigation Channel project was held at Gwadar Port on 8th March.

The project was officially started on April 7, 2023. "The desilting process came into action to restore the original depth of navigational channel at

Gwadar Port offering heavyweight ships to float well. It will ensure seamless movement of all types of vessels and will facilitate them to dock at ease without any hiccup," GPA Desilting Project Director Dawood Baloch told Gwadar Pro. "As per plan, we reclaimed 14 meters of natural and original operational depth at Gwadar Port at a cost of Rs 4.7 billion," another GPA official said.

He expressed satisfaction on the pace of operation. China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) official said that undoubtedly, no desilting activity was taken place in the last 7 years.

## PTA's QoS survey evaluates cellular Services

ISLAMABAD (APP): To measure the performance and quality of Cellular Mobile Operators' (CMOs) services being provided to customers, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) carried out an Independent Quality of Service (QoS) Survey in 17 cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh Balochistan and three cities of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK).

Survey routes were selected to cover main roads, service roads, and key sectors/colonies, totaling 14,000 kilometers in 79 days to cover the maximum

area said a news release.

Mobile handsets, set to technology auto-detect and 3G locked modes, were employed for Voice Calls, SMS, and Mobile Broadband/Data sessions, especially in AJ&K cities. The survey included 0.25 million tests for Data, 45,000 for Voice & SMS, and 0.13 million tests in Okla, utilizing automated QoS Monitoring & Benchmarking Tools to ascertain compliance with Next Generation Mobile Service (NGMS) licenses as well as Cellular Mobile Network Quality of Service (QoS) Regulations 2021.



QUETTA: Workers of Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) are busy in cleaning and draining the stagnant rainwater after heavy downpour of winter season.

## Polling for Senate's 48 vacant seats on April 2

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Elections Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced that polling for the 48 vacant seats in the upper house of parliament will take place across the four provinces on April 2.

Candidates interested in contesting the elections must obtain nomination papers from the Election Commission headquarters and provincial election commissioners of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa starting Monday.

Nomination papers can be deposited with the relevant returning officers on March 15 and 16. The ECP will issue the schedule on March 14.

According to ECP, the six-year term of the 52 senators elected in 2018 set to end on March 12, 2024. Additionally, with the merger of erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the 25th Constitutional Amendment, the

seats for four senators ceased to exist. As a result, the total number of senators to be elected has been reduced to 48 after the elimination of the four FATA seats. The ECP announced that elections will be held for seven general seats, two seats reserved for women, two for scholars/technocrats, and one non-Muslim seat in Punjab.

In Sindh, there will also be elections for seven general seats, two seats reserved for women, two for scholars/technocrats, and one non-Muslim seat.

In addition to this, lawmakers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) assembly would elect members against seven general seats, two women and two seats for technocrats, including Ulema. The lawmakers from Balochistan assembly would elect members against seven general seats, two women and two seats for technocrats, including Ulema.

## AJK government highlighting Kashmir issue: President AJK

MIRPUR (APP): AJK President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry emphasized the primary goal of the AJK government in highlighting the Kashmir issue during a briefing organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell (JKLC) on Monday.

He praised JKLC's role in research and youth education on Kashmir and welcomed the establishment of the Kashmir Policy Research Institute, stressing the global importance of Kashmiri voices.

AJK President announced a public awareness campaign from March 16 in Mirpur to expose Indian government activities. He condemned Indian atrocities in Jammu and Kashmir post-2019, highlighting restrictions on fundamental freedoms and media.

He commended the government and JKLC for their efforts in raising global Kashmir awareness and acknowledged the expatriate Kashmiri community's role.

He also criticized Modi's visit to occupied Kashmir, labeling it as an attempt to portray false normalcy amidst worsening conditions. The briefing included presentations by Director Kashmir Policy Research Institute Dr Raja Muhammad Sajjad Khan, attended by officials including Advisor to the AJK president Sardar Imtiaz Khan and Secretary Presidential Affairs Dr Idrees Abbasi.

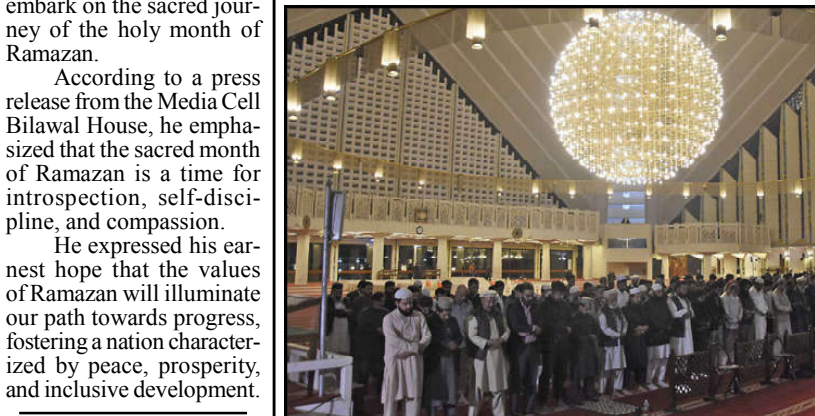
## Gorgage greets Zardari for winning president election

QUETTA (APP): Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) Ubaidullah Gorgage on Monday facilitated Asif Zardari and termed it a proof of successful democratic process in the country.

In his statement issued here, while congratulating Asif Ali Zardari on being elected as the President of Pakistan for the second time with huge majority, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said that the President Zardari getting votes from all provinces including Balochistan was a sign that he was a symbol of federalism.

He said that National Assembly, Senate and elected members of the four provinces have expressed their confidence on him.

He said that it is the continuation of democratic values and the victory of democracy, the coalition parties will work together for the development and prosperity of Pakistan, he said. He said that after the arrival of President Zardari in the President's House, a new era of supremacy of constitutional institutions and Parliament would begin in the country.



People offering Namaz-e-Taraweh of first ramadan at Faisal Mosque in the Federal Capital.

## China disaster warning technology brings benefits to Pak

BEIJING (APP): Zhang Xinying, a National CPPCC Committee Member and Deputy Director of the Science and Climate Change Department at the China Meteorological Administration, put forth a proposal to enhance early warning capabilities and effectively respond to climate change.

"Meteorology knows no borders and can make the greatest contribution along the Belt and Road," he stated during this year's Two Sessions, the annual meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

His proposal advocates for the establishment of an Asian Disaster Warning Center and Partnership Alliance, with a focus on supporting the development of early warning systems in countries along the Belt and Road Initiative. China aims to contribute its expertise and solutions in weather forecasting, climate prediction, disaster identification, risk assessment and system development, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. Over the years, China has provided meteorological disaster warning services to 129 developing countries. "We have been actively assisting more countries, particularly small island nations, in establishing disaster warning systems to benefit people worldwide," said Zhang Xinying. China's expertise in disaster warning technology has also brought significant benefits to Pakistan. Since the establishment of the China Meteorological Administration's satellite broadcasting system in Bangladesh in 2011, its coverage has expanded to most parts of the Asia-Pacific and Africa. The system provides 392 types of data in 12 categories. During the floods caused by heavy rainfall in Pakistan in 2022, the meteorological data provided by this system proved crucial in addressing the immediate crisis.

## PM directs uninterrupted gas, power supply during Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed for ensuring uninterrupted gas and power supply to the consumers during the holy month of Ramadan.

He also directed for provision of every possible facilities to the private sector, local and foreign investors in the exploration of gas and oil, refining and distribution of these natural resources.

The prime minister chaired a high level meeting on petroleum sector, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Senators Ishaq Dar and Dr Musadik Malik, Sheza Fatima Khawaja, Ahsan Khan Cheema, Jahanzab Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ali Pervaiz Malik and relevant senior officers.

Addressing the participants, he said that the government was not meant for doing businesses rather its responsibility was to extend all kind of facilities to the private sector and ensure protection of the rights of the consumers especially the vulnerable segments of the society.

He also asked for taking steps for promotion of global investment in exploration of Tight Gas and undersea oil and gas reserves, regretting that Pakistan's maritime area was huge in size when compared with Balochistan province but no steps were taken to explore its hidden natural resources.

He stressed upon exploration of undersea natural resources including oil and gas reserves and their full utilization was among the top priorities of the government.

Emphasising to enhance the petroleum refining capacity of the country, he sought the formulation of a comprehensive strategy to do away with the circular debt of oil and gas sectors and work out a durable solution to the issue.

He also instructed to reduce the gas sector losses through smart metering and identify and take strict action against the thieves of gas and oil.

"I will not allow any more wastage of the people's hard-earned money and the loss to the national exchequer," the prime minister remarked.

He instructed strict monitoring of the LPG sector to ensure provision of the commodity to the consumers at low price.

## Governor Balochistan grieved over death of wife of Asfandiyar

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of central leader of Awami National Party (ANP) and senior politician, Asfandiyar Wali Khan. In a condolence statement issued here on Monday, the Governor prayed that may Allah Almighty rest the departed soul into its eternal peace and give enough strength and patience to the bereaved family.

## British Govt announces \$150m for protection of Muslim communities

LONDON (Online): British government has announced 150 million dollars for protection of Muslim communities in the country against Islamophobia.

The funding will be used to protect mosques, Muslim faith schools and other community centers.

Home Secretary James Cleverly said anti-Muslim hatred has absolutely no place in our country. A group which monitors anti-Muslim incidents said there has been a 335 percent increase in cases of Islamophobia since October 7 last year.

## Drainage system restored after heavy rain in Quetta city, Commissioner

Leaves of staff cancelled due to extraordinary situation

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Commissioner and Administrator Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat has stated that the drainage system has been restored after rain in the main city area including Imdad Chowk and adjacent areas on Monday.

The Commissioner having additional charge of Administrator Quetta Metropolitan Corporation personally supervised the draining of rain and sewerage water and reviewed the activities in this regard.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner directed to the officers of Metropolitan Corporation to make coordinated efforts for restoration of municipal services all over the city.

He also announced to cancel leaves of all staff of the Corporation due to the extraordinary situation of rains.

Therefore, presence of the staff must be ensured in all zones.

He said that the staff of corporation can seek administrative assistance from the office of Deputy Commissioner Quetta.

## PPP plans to set up presidential guest house in Lahore

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has announced intentions to set up a presidential guest house in Lahore following the anticipated election of Asif Ali Zardari as President. This decision, as reported by media sources, aims to bolster the party's presence in Punjab. Once established, the presidential guest house will serve as a hub for PPP leaders and dignitaries, providing a venue for gatherings and meetings. It is expected that President Asif Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto will soon visit Lahore to meet with party leaders. Sources within the party reveal that invitations will also be extended to party officials for dinner at Bilawal House Lahore. Discussions during these gatherings will include plans for organizational restructuring in Lahore and Punjab, particularly in light of former president Chaudhry Aslam Gul's resignation from the party presidency.



QUETTA: A delegation of Chaman meeting with Speaker Balochistan Assembly Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai.