

# Independent

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Gwadar

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Balochistan Apex committee meets, makes important decisions:

## Peaceful Balochistan guarantor of stable Pakistan; we have to fight against terrorism together: CM

Independent Report

QUETTA: The 16th meeting of Provincial Apex Committee of Balochistan was held with the Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti in the chair here on Monday.

The meeting was attended by the Corps Commander, Lt General Rahat Nasim Ahmed Khan, Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove, Chief Secretary, Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Chief Collector Customs, Abdul Qadir Memon, besides other concerned high ups.

Several important decisions were made about imprisonment in law and order, elimination of terrorism and smuggling and second phase of repatriation of illegal immigrants besides others.

The meeting reviewed foolproof security of the CPEC projects and the Chinese nationals working on these

projects, and decided to strictly implement the proposed SOPs in this regard.

There was consensus in the meeting on starting activities at large scale for prevention of the smuggling by removing the administrative and legal flaws.

Besides, it was decided to take the result-oriented steps for prevention of two-way smuggling of sugar, fertilizer, patrol and diesel.

Moreover, the meeting also decided to prevent the smuggling of non-custom paid to Pakistan from the border area. The provincial Home department presented data about the illegal immigrants repatriated from Balochistan in its briefing.

The process of repatriation of more illegal immigrants to their country as per the guideline and decision of federal government was made conditional with the timeline decided.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti presiding over 16th meeting of Provincial Apex Committee



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif speaks at a Closing Plenary-Rejuvenating Growth, at a Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum.

## Pakistan mulls introducing digital currency

RIYADH (INP): Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the government is considering the possibility of introducing digital currency within its borders.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum (WEF) special meeting in Riyadh, Finance Minister Aurangzeb expressed Pakistan's contemplation towards digital currency adoption.

"We generate Rs9.4 trillion in annual revenues, yet half of our economy re-

mains undocumented," he stated.

Aurangzeb further said that an agreement was signed with McKinsey on Friday to facilitate comprehensive digitalisation of the economy.

"They are going to come in and help us with the end-to-end digitalisation of our economy," the finance minister said.

FinMin Aurangzeb emphasized the urgent need to implement a framework for a green tax economy.

## Pakistan, Malaysia to hold JMC this year to study markets, explore economic opportunities

RIYADH (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday met with Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato Seri Utama Haji Mohamad Bin Haji Hasan in which they reviewed the broad range of relations with a special focus on enhancing trade and investment ties.

In the meeting held on

the sidelines of the Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) being held here, two sides agreed to hold the next round of Joint Ministerial Commission meeting in Islamabad during the year.

In the Joint Ministerial Commission meeting, the two sides will study the markets and take full advantage of the opportunities offered in various sectors for tangible economic



the sidelines of the Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) being held here, two sides agreed to hold the next round of Joint Ministerial Commission meeting in Islamabad during the year.

outcomes, according to a press release.

## Administrative secretaries of different provincial govt. departments transferred

Independent Report QUETTA: The administrative secretaries of different provincial government departments have been transferred on Monday.

According to an official notification issued here by the services and General Administration Department (S&GAD) on Monday, Secretary Agriculture and Cooperatives Department, Sohailur Rehman Baloch has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD while Secretary Minorities, Dawood Khan Bazai has been transferred and posted as the Secretary Agriculture and Cooperatives.

The Secretary Local Government, Noor Ahmed Pirani has been transferred

and directed to report in the S&GAD.

The Member Chief Minister Inspection Team, Abdul Rauf Baloch has been transferred and posted as Secretary Local Government department.

Similarly, Director General Environmental Protection Agency, Muhammad Ibrahim has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD while CEO of BSEZ and Industrial State Development Company, Moin ur Rehman has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD. Moreover, Muhammad Yasir Khan Bazai, serving as Deputy Commissioner Killa Saifullah, has been posted as Director General EPA.

## SC roster revised as CJP not to hear cases today

ISLAMABAD (INP): The roster of today's hearing in the Supreme Court (SC) was revised as Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa will not hear cases on Monday.

The SC registrar issued the revised roster moments before the commencement of the today's proceedings.

The channel said the SC officials informed the litigants about the changes in the roster just before starting the hearing.

As per the channel report, Chief Justice (CJ) Qazi Faez Isa will conduct the Chamber Work today while Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, and Justice Athar Minallah will be included in Bench No 1.

## Four terrorists gunned down in Tank operation

TANK (INP): Security forces personnel gunned down four terrorists during an operation in District Tank of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to a statement issued by the military's media wing Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Monday, the security forces launched the operation after receiving information about presence of the terrorists in the area.

The security forces cordoned off the area and launched a swift action which resulted into the death of four terrorists.

According to the ISPR, the slain terrorists were involved in a number of attacks against security forces and civilians. It may be mentioned here that a sessions judge, Shakirullah Marwat, was abducted while travelling from Tank to DI Khan on Sunday but he was recovered from North Waziristan district during the night.

## Woman murdered for using mobile phone in Khuzdar

KHUZDAR (INP): A man in Balochistan district of Khuzdar has confessed on Monday to murdering his wife for using mobile phone.

Sources in district administration informed that the murder had happened about two weeks ago in Greesha area of Tehsil Zahri in Khuzdar District.

The sources said the investigation led to the discovery that the killer is the husband of the slain woman. Accused Rahmatullah allegedly confessed to killing his wife for using mobile phone.

## IMF approves disbursement of \$1.1 bn loan tranche

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday approved disbursement of \$1.1 billion last loan tranche, marking the successful end of the second bailout package in eight years but it took heavy toll in the shape of unbearable inflation and slowing economic wheel.

The Executive Board of the IMF approved the completion of the second review of the \$3 billion Standby Arrangement, confirmed the Ministry of Finance. This also paved the way for the release of the last loan tranche of \$1.1 billion.

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The global lender approved the completion of the second review of the arrangement hours after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the country's debt trap had become a 'death trap', calling it the biggest challenge for his government. He made these remarks while addressing the closing session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday approved disbursement of \$1.1 billion last loan tranche, marking the successful end of the second bailout package in eight years but it took heavy toll in the shape of unbearable inflation and slowing economic wheel.

However, they expressed satisfaction over deep-rooted relations between the two countries, based on historic, cultural and religious affinity. The COAS emphasized the need to further strengthen existing military to military cooperation between the two Armed Forces.

Earlier on arrival at GHQ, the Commander Turkish Land Forces, laid wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Army presented the guard of honour to the visiting dignitary.



Commander Turkish Land Forces General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu meeting with Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi

## Justice Babar dismisses pleas seeking his recusal in audio leak case

ISLAMABAD (APP): Justice Babar Sattar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday dismissed the miscellaneous applications filed by PEMRA, FIA and PTA seeking his recusal from hearing the audio leaks cases.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 500,000 each on Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

However in an identical plea, it summoned Intelligence Bureau's (IB) joint director in personal capacity on next date of hearing, which would be announced later. The court was told that approval to file the miscellaneous plea was given by him.

Justice Babar Sattar heard the identical petitions pertaining to the audio leaks filed by Bushra Bibi and Najam Saqib. Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan and Additional Attorney General Munawar Duggal also appeared before the court.

## Incumbent Parliament has no 'legitimate' position: JUI-F Chief

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman raising questions on the 'legitimacy' of the incumbent parliament has said that they have compromised on principles and "sold the democracy".

In his maiden address on floor of the National Assembly (NA) on Monday

after 2024 general elections, he expressed concerns over state of representation in Pakistan and asked whether this was really a people's representative parliament. Maulana Fazlur Rehman alleged that the governments were formed in palaces and bureaucrats decided who would be the Prime Minister.

## No peace in world without permanent peace in Gaza: PM

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday said permanent peace in Gaza was imperative for peace in the world. He was speaking at the plenary meeting of the special session of World Economic Forum on the theme of "Rejuvenating Growth".

He said, "The world will not be in peace unless there is a permanent peace in Gaza."

As he talked about Gaza, the audience in the hall responded with resounding applause.

He said the conflict in Ukraine brought to the world skyrocketing commodity prices, and Pakistan could not import and procure vital raw materials for industry and agriculture.

"On top of that inflation is breaking the back of developing countries," he said. Coupled with that, Pakistan faced devastation in 2022 due to huge unimaginable floods.

The prime minister said, "Pakistan is one of those countries which have nothing to do with the rea-

sons leading to climate change. Our contribution to emissions is not even fraction of one percent."

Due to the catastrophic floods in Pakistan, large swaths of land were submerged, millions of houses and animals were washed away, and stagnant water brought water borne diseases all across the country, he continued.

He said his government spent Rs 100 billion from scarce resources for relief and rehabilitation of the flood affectees.

## CTD arrests four key TTP terrorists involved in Bisham attack

PESHAWAR (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday claimed to have arrested four key terrorists of Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), involved in a suicide attack on the vehicle of Chinese engineers in Bisham district, last month.

Termining the arrests a 'big headway', the CTD KP spokesperson in a statement identified the suspects as mastermind Adil Shehbaz, and Muhammad Shafiq Qureshi, Zahid Qureshi and Nazeer Hussain. The head of the arrested terrorists, Adil Shehbaz, was a resident of Jalalabad district of Afghanistan.

The four terrorists including Adil Shehbaz, Muhammad Shafiq Qureshi, Zahid Qureshi and Nazeer Hussain were residing in district Mansehra of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The spokesperson said that "terrorist Shehbaz had admitted to playing a pivotal role in the execution of the Bisham attack". He has also confessed to having links with Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

## Kidnapped judge Marwat rescued from DI Khan

DI KHAN (INP): The Dera Ismail Khan Police on Sunday said that kidnapped judge Shakirullah Marwat has been rescued from DI Khan.

The senior judge was abducted from DI Khan two days ago. Police sources claimed that the judge has reached his home safely.

## President confers NI (M) upon Commander Turkish Land Forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on



Monday conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) upon Commander of the Turkish Land Forces General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, in a special investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The ceremony was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, senior military leadership and other senior officials. The Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) was conferred upon General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu in recognition of his illustrious services.

Later, the visiting Commander of Turkish Land Forces, General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, also called on the President, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Special anti-polio drive gets underway in Balochistan

Secretary Health formally inaugurates polio immunization campaign; pledges to eradicate polio virus from province with support of polio workers, parents and civil society

Independent Report

QUETTA: The special anti-polio campaign got underway in 30 districts of Balochistan province on Monday.

The Secretary Health, Abdullah Khan formally inaugurated the polio immunization campaign by administering anti-polio vaccine to the children at Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for Polio Eradication here.

Also present on the occasion were Coordinator of EOC, Syed Zahid Shah and other concerned officials besides the representatives of World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Speaking to the media persons after inauguration of the immunization campaign, Secretary Health said that the polio immunization campaign has been started in 30 districts of the province as part of our mission of saving our children from the polio virus.

During the campaign, more than 2,395 children below five years of age would be administered anti-polio campaign in 30 districts of the province, he mentioned.



GWADAR: Additional Deputy Commissioner General Tabish Baloch presiding over polio review meeting

Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Weathering the storm**

The year 2023 is a sobering reminder of the tumultuous relationship Asia has with climate change and how this change appears to be gaining momentum each year. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, Asia bore the brunt of climate and weather disasters last year, with temperatures in the region climbing almost 2°C above the historical average. This warming has led to more frequent and severe weather phenomena, from debilitating heatwaves to devastating floods. Pakistan finds itself grappling with these realities early this year.

The National Disaster Management Authority has issued warnings of ongoing severe weather conditions likely to persist until April 29, including potential flooding and storms that threaten to disrupt lives and livelihoods. These alerts come in the wake of a series of weather-induced calamities since February that have inflicted significant damage, with the death toll rising and infrastructure strained. This escalating frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters makes evident the need for Asian countries to bolster their meteorological capabilities and disaster preparedness.

For Pakistan, the challenge is twofold. Firstly, there is a pressing need to enhance the capacity and resources of the NDMA and provincial meteorological departments. This means investing in advanced forecasting technologies and expanding early warning systems to ensure timely and accurate weather updates. Secondly, we need a strategy for climate resilience. This would involve building and updating infrastructure to withstand extreme weather, ensuring sustainable agricultural practices so our food sources remain secure, and empowering local populations through community-based disaster-risk management programmes. Every citizen must be made aware of their role in disaster preparedness and response. Moreover, the plight of farmers, highlighted by recent storms affecting the wheat harvest in Punjab, makes a strong case for agricultural reforms. Policies that support crop insurance, improve access to weather-resistant seed varieties, and promote water conservation techniques are vital. Such reforms will help stabilise agricultural output and safeguard farmers' incomes against the caprices of climate.

On a regional level, Asian countries must work closely on climate action initiatives. Sharing technology, knowledge, and strategies can amplify individual efforts and lead to regional resilience. Global cooperation, too, is key. Developed nations need to support vulnerable regions through funding, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives.

The writing is on the wall. The time for incremental steps is over. The scale of the challenge requires bold, decisive actions that reflect the urgency of the moment. For Pakistan, and Asia at large, building resilience is no longer a matter of choice but a necessity for survival in an era marked by unprecedented climatic upheaval. As we advance through 2024, let this be the year when we all proactively ensure that our communities are safeguarded and that the future is secure against the inevitable next storm.

**Stirring monster**

Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Last month's attack on a Moscow concert hall garnered global media attention, highlighting the rapidly expanding capabilities of the militant Islamic State. The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan has provided opportunities for militant groups to revisit their policies and targets, resulting in a surge in terrorism. In the South Asia region, in addition to ideological affiliates of Al Qaeda, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) now poses a significant threat.

Since its formation in 2015, ISKP has extended its influence in South Asia and is experiencing a resurgence enabled by the post-US withdrawal situation. Although the group was forced in 2019 to surrender control of territory it once held in northern and eastern Afghanistan, it has shifted its focus to urban warfare and has since executed numerous lethal attacks. It is also striving to broaden its geographic scope beyond Afghanistan by attracting talent from existing extremist networks.

A central body, the General Directorate of Provinces, is entrusted by the IS to coordinate regional affiliates. The GDP has a dedicated bureau for South Asia called the Maktab al-Saddiq. Reportedly, ISKP maintains communication with its local leadership, but local formations also exercise operational autonomy. ISKP seems flexible in its ambitions, operations, and ties with other militant groups. This is why, after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and despite the arrests and killings of its members, ISKP remains a significant threat.

The ISKP's strategy

can be divided into two phases: from 2015 to late 2019, its strategy was to gain territory and consolidate control. However, by 2019, ISKP was facing intense pressure and consequently lost territorial control, which proved to be a significant setback. In the second phase, from 2020 onwards, it began focusing on urban warfare. This change of strategy came with the objective of eroding the legitimacy of the Afghan Taliban among the locals. The shift was followed by attacks on the Nangarhar prison, a funeral procession in Nangarhar, and attacks on local Shias and students at Kabul University. In the 2020 attack on Nangarhar Jail, carried out by 11 suicide bombers, 1,000 prisoners were released, including 280 ISKP members. Subsequently, the number of ISKP attacks in Afghanistan increased from 83 in 2020 to 334 in 2021. Two weeks after the exit of US troops from Afghanistan, the attack on Kabul airport resulted in 170 deaths.

Initially, ISKP recruitment was done primarily from areas around the Pak-Afghan border, from where it attracted former TTP fighters with Salafi linkages and sectarian influences. The ISKP's territorial losses in Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover have since changed recruitment patterns, and the group has consequently tried to attract militants on the pretext that the Taliban betrayed the jihadi cause and hence it is the only viable option to be associated with.

The ISKP also intends to expand in the periphery, including India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. However, it has struggled with ground operations. The presence of Myanmar's disenfranchised

Rohingya population in Bangladesh offers the potential for the recruitment of sympathisers. In Bangladesh, the one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar (52 per cent of whom are children) have already been targeted by the ISKP; however, the group withdrew when faced with the wrath of counterterrorism (CT) operations.

Denying space to violent non-state actors in poor or disaster-affected communities is critical. States should invest more funds in eradicating illiteracy and developing vocational skills in order to deter employment by militant groups within poor communities, and strengthen relief operations and improve the well-being of disaster victims in order to discourage employment within disaster-affected communities.

Since the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the ISKP has not faced the same pressure from CT operations, but it has still not seemed very successful in expanding its influence in South Asia. The primary reason for its inability is its confinement to Afghanistan, the availability of a smaller number of foreign fighters to join ISKP, and its lack of success in establishing an operational hierarchy outside Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, the ISKP is trying to take advantage of the withdrawal of US troops, weak governance, isolated administration, absence of an organised CT apparatus, use of technology, latest propaganda techniques, and the vacuum created due to a fractured Al Qaeda.

The question remains: are the great powers intent on stopping it in its tracks, or will the threat be allowed to return? -- Courtesy Dawn

**Campus protests**

Huma Yusuf

The world has been watching as police storm US university campuses to arrest pro-Palestine supporters. This is an uncomfortable escalation of mounting surveillance and censorship at campuses after months of a growing crackdown: cancellations of poetry readings and talks, social media campaigns against students and faculty, dismissals of university presidents, suspension of pro-Palestine student groups.

The mass arrests of students and clearing of encampments has ignited calls for another free speech movement on US campuses, akin to the one in the 1950s against the excesses of McCarthyism. Calls to defend the right of students to protest are mounting globally, and recalling how such activism in the past helped ensure just outcomes ranging from the Vietnam War to South African apartheid. But nothing is ever so straightforward.

Free speech and democracy advocates should worry about the way in which this is playing out. It is not a given that a wider student movement is brewing — the summer break is imminent and it is unclear whether the students can sustain the momentum.

The clampdown also shows how easily peaceful protest can be re-constructed as disruption, false speech, and the threat of violence (in a recent op-ed, an anti-protest Columbia University professor framed persistent drumming as a form of violence). Where such precedent is established, more clampdowns will follow — and not just on American campuses. Authoritarians everywhere are taking lessons from the US on how effectively to shut down critical voices. Start small, capture the narrative, dis-

tort and weaponise the opposition's words, then send out law enforcement. This is why the challenges of students at elite US university campuses are relevant beyond the context of Gaza.

The images of mass student arrests are inspiring romanticised paeanes to Gen Z, pointing out that a generation that was being written off as ill-informed and apolitical is in fact ready to fight for justice. Rather than indulge in complacency, activists everywhere should focus on what is working, and what is not.

One key success is the local relevance of the protests. Rather than broadly campaign for an Israeli ceasefire or the two-state solution, students are making specific demands of their universities: to divest from companies that are providing weapons to the Israeli army and those that profit from the war. They have also framed their demands in the context of increased transparency.

Protesters are also informed about their First Amendment rights and the legality (or not) of various protest tactics. They are well networked across the country, and supported by legal rights groups. Where protesters have been targeted with charges of antisemitism and disruption, there is an accompanying debate about their interpretation of the law.

While the protesters were right to build on the momentum of anti-fossil fuel campaigning, which has invited wider participation, there is some danger that these protests become all-inclusive: in some universities, there are also demands to cut ties with Israeli institutions or end scientific research that could support the manufacture of weapons that could be used to perpetrate genocide. At Columbia University, protesters have also made demands about low-income housing in the nearby Harlem neighbourhood and called for the university to review its relationship with the New York Police Department. While this diversity of demands will sustain a culture of campus activism, it risks dilution of the present cause.

The extent to which students are informed also varies greatly. The history of certain slogans and images being used, for example, is poorly understood, and so has resulted in protesters being accused of antisemitism. In a university setting, protest should not just be about opposition, but also education. The growing toxicity of anti-protest stances means there are dwindling opportunities for learning and dialogue.

Over recent days, my social media feeds increasingly feature young voices from Pakistan wondering whether they should launch pro-Palestine protests and not just leave such activism to the 'goras'. This is the wrong approach. Activism works when it is rooted in a local context and driven by specific demands. Pakistan has a powerful history of student activism, from the protests against Ayub Khan's dictatorship to the more recent Student Solidarity Movement demanding student unions and an end to student harassment.

The recent bill supporting students' unions and Quid-i-Azam University's decision to allow such groups means Pakistan too is at the cusp of a revival of student activism. Let campus protest movements thrive, but let them do so in the spirit of justice, knowledge and positive change. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**Pak-Saudi economic ties enter a new era with trade boosting steps ahead: PM**

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the economic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had entered a new era as both countries were set to take concrete measures to boost the volume of bilateral trade.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Saudi Minister of Commerce Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasbi on the sidelines of the Special Meeting of World Economic Forum here, said the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was playing an active role in promoting and facilitating

the foreign investment in the country.

The Saudi minister told the prime minister that on the directives of Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom was prioritising trade and investment in Pakistan.

A delegation of Saudi businessmen, traders and investors would soon visit Pakistan, he added. The Saudi minister said that the targets were being set to take the bilateral ties to a new height within one or one-and-half years.

Prime Minister

Shehbaz said that the Pakistani nationals had played a significant role in the progress and prosperity of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Minister Al-Qasbi stressed the need to further promote the sentiments about the Pak-Saudi ties among the youth and new generation.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, Information and Broadcasting Minister Attallah Tarar, Petroleum Minister Dr Musaddik Malik and Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi also attended the meeting.



RIYADH: Saudi Minister for Commerce H.E. Majid Al Kasabi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

**Digital transformation**

**Civil society, private sector & academia's collaboration with govt vital: Shaza Fatima**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima on Monday said that collaborations among the government, civil society, private sector and educational institution is vital for achieving digital transformation in the country.

She expressed these views in her special remarks at the Country Digital Ecosystem Diagnostic Report: Validation Workshop Report: Validation Workshop dialogue hosted by the Sustainable Development

Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to facilitate knowledge exchange among key stakeholders, driving sustainable development in Pakistan's digital landscape.

The Country Digital Ecosystem Diagnostic Report: Validation Workshop is a crucial milestone in the ongoing efforts to assess and enhance Pakistan's digital landscape. The diagnostic report provides key insights into Pakistan's digital ecosystem, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats across different pillars.

Shaza Fatima emphasized the importance of diagnostic reports and research surveys for the government in creating well-informed policies, strategies, and their implementation. She stressed that short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans must be based on available data to ensure effective decision-making in the digital transformation journey.

**Continuing tight monetary stance SBP maintains policy rate at 22%**

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan, Monday, persistently kept policy rate unchanged at 22 percent while stressing on continuation of the current monetary policy stance to bring inflation down to the target range.

The central bank, in a statement issued here following the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), noted that the macroeconomic

stabilization measures though contributing to considerable improvement in both inflation and external position amid moderate economic recovery, level of inflation was still high despite of

declending trends. The committee reviewed Inflation outlook and found it in line with the MPC's expectations as inflation has continued to moderate noticeably in H2-FY24. Headline inflation in March declined to 20.7% from 23.1% in February while core inflation fell significantly to 15.7% from 18.1% in February.

Besides the coordinated tight monetary and fiscal policy response, other factors that have led to this favorable outcome include lower global commodity prices, improved food supplies and high base effect.



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Pakistan calls on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Ahad Khan Cheema.

**CDNS attains Rs 1375b targets in fresh bond**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 1375 billion in fresh bonds and achieved 80 percent of annual target in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to April 25.

The National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1742 billion for the year 2023-24, in which it is encouraging that 80 percent of the target has been achieved, and it is hoped that National Savings will surpass its annual target this FY 2023-24, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Monday. The CDNS surpassed

the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, he said. He said this was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

"The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said.

Given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

**BankIslami achieves remarkable financial results of Rs 6.3billion**

KARACHI (APP): Maintaining its growth momentum, BankIslami delivered an impressive return for its shareholders, with a remarkable 99% surge in its profit before tax for the first quarter of 2024.

The Bank's profit before tax reached Rs. 6.3 billion, with a post-tax profit of Rs. 3.2 billion, representing a growth of 79.2%. Despite adverse market conditions, the Bank remains committed to financial excellence.

Prominently, it demonstrated magnificent cost efficiency, as evidenced by the reduced cost-to-

income ratio of 43.1% during the period, compared to 47.9% in the same period last year.

BankIslami strategically expanded its investment portfolio and grew its financing portfolio despite navigating through ongoing economic uncertainty.

Consequently, the investment portfolio reached Rs. 332.2 billion, while the financing portfolio was at Rs. 253.6 billion showing an improvement in infection ratio to 8.2% from 9.0% in December 2023.

**Rupee sheds 01 paise against US dollar**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday lost 01 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.39 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.38. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.25 and Rs 279.85 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 49 paise and closed at Rs 298.38 against the last-day closing of Rs 298.87, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged at Rs1.78, whereas an increase of 31 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs348.79 compared to the last closing of Rs348.48.

The Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal witnessed no change and closed at Rs75.79 and Rs74.22 respectively.

**Shehbaz's resuming PMLN's presidency to be refreshing change: Zahid**

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that PM Shehbaz Sharif's resuming of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) presidency after a seven-year gap will be a refreshing change. Talking to business community on Monday, he said that this shift will be a significant development and a welcome change in

the country's politics.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the business community anticipates that political and economic conditions will improve rapidly under the guidance of Nawaz Sharif. At the same time, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar will work hard to promote economic diplomacy.

He said that the fake cases against Nawaz Sharif have met their fate and that his presidency will give the party more public recognition and a new lease of life.

**Shipping activity at Port Qasim**

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where three ships namely, MSC Beira IV, Gold Trader and Milaha Qatar carrying Container, Chemicals and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Engro Terminal and Gasport Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile three more ships, MSC Antigua, Majestic Noor and FSM scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice and LPG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

## Ahsan Iqbal highlights role of engineering in developed world

NAROWAL (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said that behind the development of the modern world is the hard work of engineers and the solution of most of the problems of all sectors of life, including health, food, and industry is related to the field of engineering. He expressed the views at the ongoing "Science Mela 2024" at University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Narowal Campus. Students of different departments of the university presented their final year projects for exhibition at the Innovation Center of the University of Engineering and Technology sub-campus

Narowal. The projects related to electrical, mechanical, civil, biomedical engineering and computer engineering. Students of various universities including Agriculture University Faisalabad, UET Sialkot Campus, ITU University of Narowal, Veterinary University Narowal Campus participated in the science fair. Later, Ahsan Iqbal handed over new buses provided to the University of Engineering and Technology Narowal Campus to the administration and also planted a sapling in the university. He also participated in the prize distribution ceremony in the seminar hall of UET Narowal Campus.

Speaking on this occasion, he said that UET Narowal Campus was his dream for which he had worked hard to achieve. "Behind the development of the modern world is the hard work of engineers. The solution of most of the problems of all sectors of life, including health, food, and industry is related to the field of engineering. Today we are living in the era of technology, today's era is the era of artificial intelligence," he added. He said, "If you want to establish your place in the world of education and research, you need to go through the process of continuous learning. We have established departments like National Center for Satellite Technology.



FAISALABAD: A lady health worker administering polio drops to a child during 7-days anti polio campaign in the city.

## Police committed to continue best services for masses: RPO

MULTAN (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Capt (retd) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry on Monday said that the police would continue best services for the masses and more improvement was being made in service delivery for public facilitation. In a ceremony of awarding cash prizes and commendatory certificates to traffic police officials over

impressive performance here, the regional police officer said that the basic purpose of the police department was to serve the people and to protect lives and properties of the masses adding that all possible efforts were being made for this purpose. He said that the department was striving hard to ensure maximum relief to masses through improving service delivery.

## Balighur Rehman condoles with Saira Afzal

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman on Monday visited the residence of Member National Assembly (MNA) Saira Afzal Tarar at her ancestral village and extended condolences to her on the death of her father, Senior Politician Afzal Hussain Tarar. Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman offered Fatiha and prayed to Allah Almighty to grant the highest ranks in Jannah to the departed soul.

He also prayed to give courage and sustenance to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with equanimity. The Governor Punjab said the services of Afzal Tarar (late) for the country and the party will always be remembered.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah exchanges views with MPA Imdad Pitafi during meeting held at CM House in Karachi.

## Three Sindh Ministers visit ancestral Bhutto family graveyard

LARKANA (APP): Three Provincial Ministers, Muhammad Ali Malkani, Dost Muhammad Rahmoon and Tariq Ali Talpur visited ancestral Bhutto family graveyard in Garhi Khudabakhsh Bhutto here on Monday. They paid tributes to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Ms. Benazir Bhutto, Shaheed Mir Murtaza Bhutto.

Shah Nawaz Bhutto attended the shrines of Begum Nusrat Bhutto and recited Fateha and laid flowers wreath. Speaking to the media persons, Provincial Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani said that we had come here to visit the martyrs' shrines. He said that maintaining law and order was the priority of the Sindh government. In response to a question, he said that a JIT had been formed for the recovery of Priya Kumari, which was doing its job.

He said that bumper quantity of wheat had been produced in Sindh, adding he would talk to the Chief Minister Sindh and the Provincial Minister of Food Department so that Pasco could also buy the crop.

## 5 killed, 2 injured in different incidents

FAISALABAD (APP): Five people including a minor girl were killed while two others sustained multiple injuries in different incidents in Faisalabad during last 12 hours. Police spokesman said here on Monday that Maqsood Anjum resident of Siddique Nagar was shot dead by his rivals Sajid alias Lalo, etc. to avenge an old enmity in Mithaiwala Chowk whereas accused Waqas alias Kashi shot dead Muhammad Rafiq resident of Chak 165-GB over a plot dispute.

## CM KP felicitates newly elected local bodies representatives

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Monday congratulated the newly elected six local bodies representatives in bye-elections.

Chief Minister in a statement said that in unofficial and inconclusive results, PTI-backed candidates have won five out of six seats of Tehsil Chairman which is a manifestation of the trust of the people of the province on his party. "I thank the people of these constituencies for showing full confidence in the supporting PTI-backed candidates", said Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. "I also congratulate

the party leadership and workers for the excellent success of the candidates supported by the party in the by-elections".

The chief minister said that in these elections, the nation has given a huge mandate to his party across the country.

He said party's founder can be put in jail but cannot be removed from the hearts of the people, said Ali Amin.

He further said that the public mandate should be recognized in the better interest of the country and nation.

Ali Amin said that they will continue all political, constitutional and legal struggle to achieve their right to provide relief to people of the province.



LAHORE: Chief Traffic Officer Amara Athar hold a banner along with students during Traffic Awareness walk (Use Helmet) at Faisal Chowk in the Provincial Capital.

## Marriyum says: EPD seals 170 brick kilns, registers 169 FIRs in 15 days

LAHORE (APP): Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has sealed 170 brick kilns, besides registering 169 FIRs during a province-wide campaign against the scourge of pollution during last 15 days.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb disclosed this in a statement issued on Monday. While giving details, the senior minister reported that during this

period, the department inspected a total of 4488 brick kilns in various districts, and 170 kilns were sealed for violations of environmental laws. 705 brick kilns were issued notices and fines totaling Rs.20.1 million were imposed on the owners of brick kilns found guilty of environmental law violations. Similarly, police were also approached for the registration of FIRs against 169 kiln.

## Provincial Outbreak Committee to provide immediate response during any outbreak

PESHAWAR: The first meeting of the Provincial Outbreak Committee, chaired by Minister of Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah, was held on Monday at Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The meeting was attended by Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir, Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Khan Mahsood, Special Secretary Polio Program

Abdul Basit, along with Additional DG Administration Dr. Siraj, Director EPI Dr. Arif, Director Public Health Dr. Irshad Roghani, Director IMU Dr Ijaz and all other relevant quarters in person. All DHOs and MSs attended the meeting online. It was reported to the minister that district outbreak committees have been formed in all districts of the province. Initial meetings have been conducted in the relevant districts to activate these committees. The minister stated that the purpose of the Provincial Outbreak Committee is to provide an immediate response during any outbreak. He further explained that this initiative will improve the provision of routine health services, and the performance of health department officials will be presented to this committee.

## International News

## US, Britain urge Hamas to accept Israeli truce proposal

Blinken says Israel must still do more to boost humanitarian aid to Gaza

Monitoring Desk RYADH: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday urged Hamas to swiftly accept an Israeli proposal for a truce in the Gaza war and the release of Israeli hostages held by the Palestinian militant group.

Hamas negotiators were expected to meet Qatari and Egyptian mediators in Cairo on Monday to deliver a response to the phased truce proposal which Israel presented at the weekend. "Hamas has before it a proposal that is extraordinarily, extraordinarily generous on the part of Israel," Blinken said at a

meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

"The only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire is Hamas. They have to decide and they have to decide quickly," he said. "I'm hopeful that they will make the right decision." A source briefed on the talks said Israel's proposal entailed a deal for the release of fewer than 40 of the roughly 130 hostages believed to be still held in Gaza in exchange for freeing Palestinians jailed in Israel.

A second phase of a truce would consist of a

"period of sustained calm" - Israel's compromise response to a Hamas demand for a permanent ceasefire.

A total of 253 hostages were seized in a Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which about 1,200 Israelis were also killed, according to Israeli counts.

Israel retaliated by imposing a total siege on Gaza and mounting an air and ground assault that has killed about 34,500 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities.

Palestinians are suffering from severe shortages of food, fuel and medicine in a humanitarian cri-

sis brought on by the offensive that has demolished much of the territory. Britain's Foreign Secretary David Cameron, who was also in Riyadh for the WEF meeting, also described the Israeli proposal as "generous".

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Monday that Israel must still do more to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip and that he would use his current Middle East trip - his seventh to the region since the Israel-Hamas war started in October - to press that case with Israeli leaders.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken attends the U.S.-Arab Quint Meeting with representatives from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Palestinian Authority, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg arrive for a press conference, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine.

## Israel kills at least 30 Palestinians in Rafah, new Gaza ceasefire talks expected in Cairo

Monitoring Desk CAIRO: Israeli airstrikes on three houses in the southern Gaza city of Rafah killed at least 25 Palestinians and wounded many others, medics said on Monday, as leaders of Hamas arrived in Cairo for a new round of talks with Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

In Gaza City, in the north of the Gaza Strip, Israeli warplanes struck two houses, killing at least four people and wounding several people, health officials said. The strike on the other house killed two brothers, they added. The strikes on Rafah, where more than one million people have sought refuge from months of Israeli bombardment, took place hours before Egypt was expected to host leaders of the Islamist group Hamas to discuss prospects for a ceasefire agreement with Israel. The Israeli military said it was checking the reports.

## NATO chief, on unannounced Kyiv visit, says arms flows to Ukraine will increase

Monitoring Desk KYIV: NATO boss Jens Stoltenberg told Ukrainians on Monday that his alliance's members had failed to live up to their promises of military aid in recent months, but said the flow of arms and ammunition would now increase. In an unannounced visit to Ukraine, the secretary general of the transatlantic military alliance held talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and

was due to address Ukraine's parliament, the Rada.

His visit - the third since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 - comes at a difficult time on the battlefield for Ukraine. After a failed Ukrainian counter-offensive last year, Russian forces have gained the initiative - at least in part due to a dearth of arms and ammunition from Kyiv's Western partners.

"I will also be very honest with President Zelenskyy and also with the Rada that NATO allies have not delivered what we have promised over the last months," Stoltenberg said on the train taking him into Kyiv on Monday.

"The United States spent six months to agree a package and European allies have not delivered the ammunition we promised. But now I'm confident that things will change," he said.

## China set to launch high-stakes mission to moon's 'hidden' side

Monitoring Desk BEIJING: China will send a robotic spacecraft in the coming days on a round trip to the moon's far side in the first of three technically demanding missions that will pave the way for an inaugural Chinese crewed landing and a base on the lunar south pole. Since the first Chang'e mission in 2007, named after the mythical Chinese moon goddess, China has made leaps forward in its

lunar exploration, narrowing the technological chasm with the United States and Russia. In 2020, China brought back samples from the moon's near side in the first sample retrieval in more than four decades, confirming for the first time that it could safely return an uncrewed spacecraft to Earth from the lunar surface. This week, China is expected to launch Chang'e-6 using the backup

spacecraft from the 2020 mission and collect soil and rocks from the side of the moon that permanently faces away from Earth.

With no direct line of sight with the Earth, Chang'e-6 must rely on a recently deployed relay satellite orbiting the moon during its 53-day mission, including a never-before-attempted ascent from the moon's "hidden" side on its return journey home.

## At least 40 people die in western Kenya after a dam collapses following heavy rains

Monitoring Desk NAIROBI: A dam collapsed in western Kenya early Monday, killing at least 40 people after a wall of water swept through houses and cut off a major road, police said. The Old Kijabe Dam, located in the Mai Mahiu area of the Great Rift Valley region that is prone to flash floods, col-

## Gaza protesters disrupt Paris's Sorbonne university

Monitoring Desk PARIS: Protesters angry over the Gaza war took to Paris' Sorbonne University on Monday, chanting 'Free Palestine' at the university's gates while some students set up tents in the courtyard. Days after similar protests at Paris's Sciences Po elite school, the gathering at the Sorbonne was the latest sign that demonstrations on U.S. campuses.

## Russian forces advance in Ukraine's east

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: Russian forces advanced at points along the front line in Ukraine on Monday, taking a village in the Donetsk region, gaining better positions and repelling a number of Ukrainian attacks, Russia's defence ministry said. Russia controls about 18% of Ukraine - in the east and south - and has

been gaining ground since the failure of Kyiv's 2023 counter-offensive to make any serious inroads against well dug-in Russian troops.

President Vladimir Putin in February ordered Russian troops to push further into Ukraine after the fall of the town of Avdiivka where he said Ukrainian troops had been forced to flee in chaos. Ukraine said it withdrew from Avdiivka.

## Senate adopts SC's 4 recommendations about Money Bill

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate on Monday adopted four recommendations of the Special Committee related to Money Bill, the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Convenor Special Committee Farooq Hamid Naek presented the committee's report in the House. After through discussion on the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, the committee unanimously recommended amendments in clause 2, in sub-clause (e), after the word "law", the words "or a mixed question of law and fact", shall be inserted; in clause 3, in sub-clause (e), after the word "law", the words "or mixed question of law and fact", shall be inserted. In clause 4, - (a) in sub-clause (f), in section 132, - (i) in sub-section (1), for the second proviso, the following shall be substituted, namely: "provided further that where an appeal is not decided within the aforesaid period, the Appellate Tribunal may, for reasons to be recorded

in writing, condone the delay for an aggregate period of thirty days."; in sub-section (2), in clause (b), for the word "should" the word "if" shall be substituted; and (iii) in sub-section (3), for the words "to the aforesaid hearing schedule by the taxpayer and the commissioner" the expression "by the taxpayer and the Commissioner, to the hearing schedule as prescribed, shall be substituted.

The committee also recommended amendments in sub-clause (g), in section 133, - (i) in sub-section (2), after the word "law", the words "or a mixed question of law and fact", shall be inserted;

(ii) in sub-section (3), after the word "law" the words "or a mixed question of law and fact", shall be inserted;

(iii) in sub-section (4), for the expression "a Special Bench, constituted", the expression "Special Bench or the Special Benches, as the case may be, to be constituted by the Chief Justice.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, Commander of Turkish Land Forces called on Minister for Defence & Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

## Aleem announces significant developments for motorway expansion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday announced the significant developments for

the motorway expansion from Manshera to Gilgit, Babu Sar top and Skardu region.

He made the announcement while addressing the 14th passing-out ceremony of 289 police officers at the NHMP Training College in Sheikhupura.

The ceremony was attended by Federal Secretary of Communication Ali Sher Mehsud, IG Salman Chaudhry, Additional IG Ali Sabar Kayani, Commandant DIG Syed Hashmat Kamal, patrol officers, and their families.



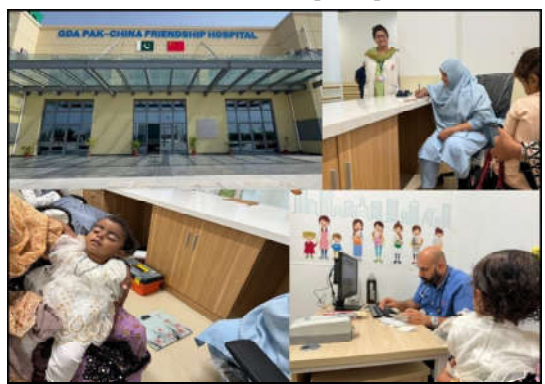
QUETTA: Justice of the Balochistan High Court (BHC), Shaukat Ali Rakhshani being briefed by Hamza Shafiqat Commissioner and Administrator Quetta during his visit to Sandeman Library of Metropolitan Corporation.

## NA passes tax laws amendment bill 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Monday passed the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 which would give the legislative effect to the taxation proposals of the federal government. The bill was taken by the House as the supplementary agenda and Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar moved the bill. The House passed the amended bill which aims to give legislative effect to the taxation proposals of the federal government to liquidate a significant number of appeals pending before Commissioner IR (Appeals) and Appellate Tribunals as ATIR is the last fact-finding authority in the appellate hierarchy provided in fiscal statutes.

## GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital starts services under Indus Health Network

**Independent Report**  
KHILJI: The initiative is a revolutionary one for the people in health sector by the provincial government under GDA. Needless to mention here is that the newly built 100-bedded GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital is a state of



Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan under supervision of Director General GDA, Dawood Khan

the art hospital according to the world standard. The hospital is equipped with modern technology offering 24 hour emergency services.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Anwar-ul-Haq called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## PM meets Bill Gates; urges sustained efforts by partners for polio-free Pakistan

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday met the founder and co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, wherein he called for a sustained effort by all the partners to reach the ultimate goal of a polio-free Pakistan.

In the meeting held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Special Meeting here, the prime minister highlighted that Pakistan was working tirelessly to eradicate polio from the country, a PM Office press release said.

Earlier, both leaders had featured in a WEF's high-level panel discussion titled "Redefining the Global Health Agenda." The prime minister thanked Bill Gates for sending him a warm congratulatory letter upon his re-election.

Bill Gates recalled the immunization and polio vaccine program in Punjab province under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif as chief minister and emphasized replicating the same practice across the country to make the immunization program a success.

While fondly recalling their interactions during his previous tenure, the prime minister reaffirmed his commitment to continue working closely with Bill Gates to ensure a stronger partnership between Pakistan and the Gates Foundation.

He thanked the BMGF for its longstanding support for polio eradication in Pakistan.

Bill Gates acknowledged Pakistan's efforts and said polio eradication was

vital to protect future generations from this crippling disease.

In addition to polio, Prime Minister Shehbaz and Bill Gates also discussed progress on ongoing activities between Pakistan and the Foundation in the areas of immunization, nutrition, and financial inclusion.

The prime minister said that the Gates Foundation was a trusted partner in Pakistan's socio-economic development and sought collaboration in other areas including IT, STEM education and disaster management.

Recalling Bill Gates' visit to Pakistan in February 2022, the prime minister extended an invitation to him to visit Pakistan again at a time of his convenience.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister Mir Ali Madad Jattak, MPA Mir Liaquat Lehari and Shakeel Durrani meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti

## FM Dar meets Saudi Energy Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed Ishaq Dar on Monday met with Saudi Minister for Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, ARAMCO CEO Amin H. Nasir and ACWA Chairman Mohammed A. Abunayyan on the sidelines of the Meeting for Global Collaboration, Growth, and Energy for Development of the World Economic Forum in Riyadh. "There is great potential for enhanced energy cooperation between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a post on X.

## Six new private member bills introduced in Senate

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as six new private member bills including the Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the Price Control and Prevention of Profiteering and Hoarding (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, the National Highways Safety (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the General Clauses (Amendment) Bill, 2022 and the Islamabad Rent Restriction (Amendment) Bill, 2023 were introduced in the Senate.

## Anees Tariq appointed as DG Industries

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Balochistan Secretariat Service (BSS) officer, Anees Tariq Gorgaji, serving as the Additional Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs has been transferred and posted as the Director General Industries, Balochistan.

This was announced in an official notification issued here by the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD) on Monday.

According to the notification, Habibullah Khan, serving as Deputy Commissioner Noshki has been transferred and directed to report in the S&GAD while in his place, Deputy Secretary, Energy Department, Amjad Soomro has been transferred and posted as the Deputy Commissioner Noshki.

## PM, Malaysian counterpart reaffirm to broaden bilateral cooperation in diverse fields

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Monday recalled the historical ties between Pakistan and Malaysia, especially in the fields of education, science & technology and trade, and undertook to further enhance the cooperation in the future.

The prime minister invited a trade and business delegation from Malaysia to Pakistan to discuss enhancing trade and investment relations between the two countries.

The prime minister met his Malaysian counterpart on the sidelines of the Special Meeting of the World Economic Forum, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

This was the first in person meeting between both leaders since Prime Minister Muhammad

Shehbaz Sharif was re-elected in March.

The two leaders have, however, spoken twice on telephone, i.e. on March 4 when Prime Minister Shehbaz took office as well as on April 10, this year on Eid ul Fitr.

Following up on their warm conversations on telephone, the prime minister appreciated the leadership of Malaysian premier and also commended his knowledge of art and literature - particularly about the National Poet of Pakistan Allama Iqbal.

The two sides also agreed to have the next meeting of Joint Ministerial Commission in Islamabad soon.

Prime Minister Shehbaz reiterated his invitation to Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to undertake an official visit to Pakistan later this year.



QUETTA: Opposition leader in Balochistan Assembly Mir Younis Lehri and Rozi Khan Kakar meeting with Provincial Minister for Irrigation Mir Sadiq Umrani

## Jam Kamal launches anti-polio drive in Hub

QUETTA (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal along with Deputy Commissioner Hub Ruhana Gul Kakar on Monday inaugurated an anti-polio campaign in his constituencies in Hub District.

Deputy Commissioner briefed the Minister regarding the preparation of the drive that the authorities were paying special attention to polio after the reports of polio virus being positive after the sampling of the sewage drains of the district Hub.

She said in the briefing that this year, a special polio campaign has been started in Balochistan after polio cases were reported in Dera Bugti and Chaman. WHO officer Dr. Nazir and the administrative officer said in the briefing that during the last polio campaign, the majority of rejected children have been recovered.

They said that 78 area in-charges, 25 monitors, 23 fax centers, 18 transit points have been established and 326 teams were formed to administer polio vaccine in Hub district.

The special anti-polio campaign will continue from April 29 to May 3. Around 360 teams have been formed across the district to vaccinate children, who will go door to door to administer polio drops to children in Hub Town and its suburbs, Tehsil Driji, Sonmiani Winder and Gadani, they said. The district officer said that our entire team, the district administration and health workers were working together.

## President Asif Zardari says Promoting AJK tourism vital for socio-economic uplift, generating economic activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday said that strengthening the tourism sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was significant to ensure the socio-economic uplift and generate economic activities in the area.

He, in a meeting with the AJK Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, assured that Pakistan would provide all possible support and assistance to facilitate investment in the diverse areas of AJK's economy, especially the tourism sector, according to a President House press release.

He said that AJK was blessed with immense potential for tourism and a beautiful landscape, which needed to be fully developed to attract tourists.

The two discussed the overall situation of AJK as well as the issues related to AJK's development.

President Zardari remarked that the AJK youth needed to be equipped with the latest skills and education to help them find gainful employment, besides contributing to AJK's development.

He said that Pakistan could assist the government of AJK in benefiting from the carbon credit markets.

During the meeting, the president assured of his support to the AJK prime minister and his government.

The AJK prime minister requested the president to visit AJK and address the AJK Legislative Assembly.

President Zardari also expressed grief over the loss of precious human lives

during the recent rain-related incidents in different parts of the AJK and hoped that the AJK government would help the affected families.

The president also reiterated Pakistan's commitment for continued moral, political and diplomatic support to the people of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) till the attainment of their right to self-determination.

Condemning the human rights violations and the atrocities being committed by the Indian occupation forces in IIOJK, he called upon the international community to put pressure on India to end human rights violations being committed by its security forces and implement the UN Security Council resolutions.



RIYADH: Founder and Co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Bill Gates calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of a special meeting of the World Economic Forum.

## Commander Turkish Land Forces calls on Defence Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Commander of Turkish Land Forces, General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu Monday called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, whereas the Defence Minister welcomed the dignitary and expressed satisfaction over common understanding on regional and global geo-political situation.

According to the news release, both sides acknowledged the strong relationship between their Armed Forces and committed to further expand defence collaboration.

The defence minister also appreciated Turkey's strong support for Pakistan on multiple forums.

## ECP summons KP CM over asset declaration discrepancies

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has summoned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Tuesday to clarify discrepancies found in his declaration of assets and liabilities submitted for the general elections of 2024. The ECP has instructed CM Gandapur to personally appear on Tuesday.

## Seven-day anti-polio drive beings in Chaman

**Independent Report**  
CHAMAN: The seven-day anti-polio campaign commenced in Chaman on Monday.

Deputy Commissioner Chaman, Captain (Retd) Raja Athar Abbas inaugurated the campaign at ceremony held at new district headquarter hospital.

Also present on the occasion were District Police Officer Chaman, Shahid Jamil Kakar, Assistant Commissioner, Mujeebur Rehman and other concerned high ups.

The Deputy Commissioner Chaman, SP Shahid Jamil and Assistant Commissioner administered the anti-polio drops to children to mark inauguration of the campaign in border district.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner stressed the need to make anti-polio campaign successful.

In this regard, Deputy Commissioner urged the parents to cooperate with the polio teams and ensure immunization of their children against polio.

Shahid Jamil Kakar said we have to provide safe future to our children.

## Nazeer urges MNAs from Balochistan to educate masses against gas theft

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar, urged the members of the National Assembly elected from Balochistan on Monday to educate the masses against gas theft in the province.

In response to a calling attention notice regarding over billing and extra service charges in Balochistan, particularly in Quetta by the Sui Gas Company, he expressed concern over the high incidence of gas theft and meter

tampering in the province. The Minister said that the government has launched campaigns against gas theft from time to time in the province. He cited a report indicating that the company is facing a 55 percent loss in the Quetta region due to gas theft.

Azam Nazeer Tarar said that natural resources are assets of the country and should be utilized with care, urging concerted efforts to combat gas theft and promote responsible use of resources.



QUETTA: Provincial Advisor for Environmental Naseemur Rehman, MPA Maulana Hidayatur Rehman, Umar Khan Achakzai, Director Khana Farhang Iran Dr. Abul Hassan and other addressing the event organized in collaboration with Pak-Iran Youth Forum and Khana Farhang Iran

## Draft of Procurement policy of MSD prepared

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The draft of procurement policy of the MSD has been prepared, which would be presented in the provincial cabinet for approval through the Health department.

The strong supply chain management dashboard has also been launched in the Medical Store Depot for transparent and timely supply of the medicines.

This and similar other details were shared by the MSD high ups with the Secretary Health, Abdullah

Khan during his visit here. The Secretary Health inaugurated the work of repair and renovation of MSD.

He also launched the digitalized supply chain management dashboard in MSD.

The initiative is aimed at bringing transparency in supply of the medicines.

Also present on the occasion were Deputy Secretary Riasat Ali, Additional Director General Health, Dr Fahim Khan and other concerned high ups.

## SIC head warns of resignation from assemblies if Imran does not get justice

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza warned the government that they will tender their resignations from the assemblies if former premier Imran Khan does not get justice.

In a tweet on Monday, "If the founder of PTI [Imran Khan] does not get justice, we will not sit in the assemblies." In the tweet, Hamid Raza suggested to the PTI leadership that they need to consider resigning from the assemblies and coming to the roads [for protesting].

SIC head Sahibzada Hamid Raza MNA also said that he will be the first person to resign from the National Assembly for PTI founder Imran Khan. He

said the PTI leadership should give a time frame of three weeks to eight weeks to the government for their demands.

On the other hand, the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan announced tabling a resolution against the fake polio cases on PTI leadership.

Talking to media outside the session court in Islamabad on Monday, Omar Ayub said an FIR was filed against him and his colleagues because they demonstrated for prisoner number 804 [Imran Khan].

He said they used their constitutional and legal right of a peaceful protest rally in the presence of Islamabad police, the next day, a fake case under various provisions was registered against them.