

# Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

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## Shehbaz, MBS agree to expedite first phase of \$5bn Saudi investment in Pakistan

Both leaders emphasise kingdom's "supportive role in Pakistan's economy and the mutual desire to strengthen trade, investment ties"; Urge int'l efforts to pressure Israel to cease hostilities in Gaza

MAKKAH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud here wherein the two countries affirmed their commitment to expediting the first wave of the previously discussed investment package worth \$5 billion.

The bilateral ties and regional as well as global developments of mutual interest, including the worrying situation in Gaza were discussed in the meeting that took place at Al-Safa Palace here on Sunday during Prime Minister Shehbaz's three-day visit to the Kingdom, according to a joint statement issued on Monday.

The discussions centered on fortifying the fraternal relations between the two brotherly nations and exploring avenues for enhanced collaboration across various sectors.

Emphasis was laid on the Kingdom's supportive role in Pakistan's economy and the mutual desire to strengthen trade and investment ties, the statement added.

The two countries called for efforts by the international community to halt Israeli military operations in Gaza and mitigate humanitarian impact besides emphasising the need to advance the peace process.

Both sides underscored the imperative for the international community to pressure Israel to cease hostilities, adhere to international law, and facilitate unhindered humanitarian aid access to Gaza.

Two sides discussed the need for advancing the peace process in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly as well as the Arab Peace Initiative aimed at finding a just and comprehensive solution, to establish an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The two sides stressed the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute to ensure peace and stability in the region.

The Crown Prince congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on assuming the office and expressed warm wishes for his tenure.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also conveyed gratitude for the Kingdom's steadfast support and hospitality and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to bolstering bilateral ties and economic cooperation.

PM Shehbaz invited the Crown Prince to undertake an official visit to

Pakistan at the earliest convenience which he accepted.

Meanwhile Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have called for efforts by the international community to halt Israeli military operations in Gaza and mitigate the humanitarian impact besides emphasising the need to advance the peace process.

The regional and global developments of mutual interest, including the worrying situation in Gaza were discussed in a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on a three-day visit to the Kingdom.

Both sides underscored the imperative for the international community to pressure Israel to cease hostilities, adhere to international law, and facilitate unhindered humanitarian aid access to Gaza, according to a joint statement issued following the meeting between the two leaders took place at Al-Safa Palace here.

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MAKKAH MUKARAMAH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during Ziaaraat of Al Masjid e Haraam.

## PTI to boycott Senate chairman, deputy elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Declaring elections for the seats of Chairman and Deputy Chairman Senate as 'unconstitutional', the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has said that it will boycott these elections.

According to media reports, PTI's core committee told that the party had now decided that it would move a court against these elections.

Sources disclosed that it was an opinion in the party that since the House of federation was incomplete due to the postponement of Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), therefore elections for these coveted seats were not constitutional. They further said that the PTI leaders were of the view that the upper House of the parliament was presently not functional due to the absence of its chairman, and the Senate Secretariat could not take any decision other than administrative ones.

Meanwhile the registrar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday raised an objection to the petition filed by five PTI senators in which they had sought a court order for delaying elections for the seats of Senate chairman and deputy chairman unless elections for the Senate seats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are held.

The senators had also prayed to the court to declare the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) notification, dated April 2, 2024, of postponement of the Senate elections in KP as null and void and give order to hold the elections in the province.

The registrar said that since the Peshawar High Court (PHC) was already hearing the KP Senate seats' election case, therefore the PTI was asked to approach the high court for the purpose. Separately, the PTI has also filed a motion against the election of Senate chairman at the Senate Secretariat on Monday.

The PTI application bears the signatures of Senators Zaqqa Taimoor, Saif Abro, Falak Naz Chitrali, Fauzia Arshad and Saifullah Niazi.



RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) interacting with players of Pakistan cricket team during an Iftar dinner hosted by him

## COAS hosts Iftar dinner for PCT at Army House

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) hosted an Iftar Dinner for Pakistan Cricket Team at Army House Rawalpindi. Pakistan Cricket Team underwent and concluded physical training at Army School of Physical Training (ASPT) camp in Kakul, Abbottabad.

Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Mohsin Naqvi along with PCB officials also attended the Iftar.

COAS while talking with the players wished them all the best in their future endeavours.

The cricketers thanked COAS for the excellent training provided to them at Kakul and the role Army plays in supporting the games in Pakistan.

## Arsenic found in letters sent to judges different from ordinary one, say investigators

ISLAMABAD (INP): The investigators have found out that the chemical found in the threatening letters sent to the Supreme Court and the high courts' judges was different from ordinary arsenic, sources said on Monday.

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) teams went to different stores to purchase arsenic. And when they looked at it, they found out that unlike the arsenic found in the letter which was white, the one they had purchased was yellow, sources said, adding this led them to decide that now they would seek assistance from drugs and chemicals manufacturing companies.

The investigators had now prepared lists of pharmaceutical companies, they disclosed.

Around six days ago, eight judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), including the high court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, received letters laced with a chemical, which was initially thought to be arsenic.

The incident took place a few days after six of these judges wrote a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) in which they had alleged interference by the country's intelligence agencies in their work, prompting the Supreme Court (SC) to take suo motu notice of it.



PESHAWAR: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari condoles with Aimal Wali Khan, KPK President Awami National Party (ANP) over the death of his mother during meeting held in Charsadda.

## Bilawal visits Wali Bagh expresses condolence with ANP leadership

PESHAWAR (APP): PPP's Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited Wali Bagh, district Charsadda on Monday wherein he expressed condolence with the President of Awami National Party (ANP) Asfandiyar Wali Khan, the death of his wife.

The PPP chairman met both Asfandiyar Wali Khan and Aimal Wali Khan to express condolence with them. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari offered feteiha for the eternal peace of the

## PM Shehbaz performs Umrah

MAKKAH (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has performed Umrah during his visit to Saudi Arabia.

According to the details, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Information and Broadcasting Minister Attaullah Tarar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and other members also performed Umrah along with prime minister.

After performing Umrah, Prime Minister Mian Shabbaz Sharif and the delegation offered special prayers for the security, development and prosperity of Pakistan and the Islamic world.

## Nepra hikes power tariff by Rs4.92 per unit

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Another big shock for the citizens as the government on Monday increased electricity tariff by Rs4.92 per unit under the monthly fuel adjustment.

According to the notification issued by the National Electricity Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), the electricity prices are increased by Rs4.92 per unit.

The power regulatory body hiked the price for February which would be charged from the consumers from the bills of April 2024.

However, the upward revision in prices of the electricity will not be applicable on the lifeline and K-Electric customers.

## Shawwal moon not sighted in Saudi Arabia, Eid will fall on April 10

RIYADH: According to the moon sighting committee in Saudi Arabia, the Shawwal moon was not sighted on Monday (April 8).

As a result, Ramadan will continue until April 9, completing 30 days, and Eidul Fitr will be celebrated on April 10 in Saudi Arabia.

## WB approves \$149.7m for two projects in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The World Bank has approved \$149.7 million dollars in financing for two projects in Pakistan, says in media reports.

As per details, the funds were okayed to support the projects related to digital economy and improved flood resilience.

This has been stated in a statement issued by the international financial institution.

The allocated funding of 78 million dollars for the Digital Economy Enhancement Project is expected to enhance financial management through technology-driven solutions and data-driven decision-making.

The investment in digital economy is also likely to streamline public services, increase transparency and foster economic growth.

Simultaneously, the 71.7 million dollars allocation for Sindh Barrages Improvement Project is likely to ensure greater flood resilience.



MAKKAH MUKARAMAH: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif coming out of Khana Kaaba

## PHC full court reference in honour of outgoing Chief Justice held

PESHAWAR: A full court reference of the judges of Peshawar High Court was held in honour of outgoing Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan here on Monday.

Besides judges of Peshawar High Court, advocate general Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and additional attorney general, the full court reference was also attended by vice chairman KP Bar Council, president and general secretary of high court bar associations, president & general secretary of Peshawar bar association, lawyers, director general KP Judicial Academy, district and sessions judges. Addressing the full court reference here at PHC, the Chief Justice said that today marked a significant milestone in his life to stand here after serving on different key positions during his long 31 years and nine month service.

Highlighting his rich education background and professional experience in the field of law, the Chief Justice said that he has passed thousands of judgments while remaining judge of district judiciary, and around 15000 judgments since elevation, adding 509 judgments were challenged in Supreme Court out of which 279 were upheld whereas 188 are still sub-judice and only 42 small matters have been set-aside. He also highlighted his valuable service after appointed as Commission to probe APS Peshawar carranage.

## PM returns after concluding visit to KSA

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, on Monday, arrived here after wrapping up his three-day visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Earlier upon his departure at the Jeddah International Airport, the prime minister was seen off by Governor Jeddah Prince Saud bin Abdullah bin Jalawi, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During his visit, Prime Minister Sharif met with Crown Prince and Prime Minister of KSA Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and discussed further fortifying of the fraternal relations between the two brotherly nations and exploring avenues for enhanced collaboration across various sectors.

The federal cabinet members and Punjab chief minister accompanied the prime minister during the visit. The prime minister performed Umrah and offered Nawafil inside Ka'aba as he was granted access inside 'Baitullah', as a special gesture.



JEDDAH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is seen off by Governor of Jeddah, Prince Saud bin Abdullah Al Jalawi at Jeddah International Airport.

## Lawyer gets six months in jail for misconduct towards LHC judge

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court has awarded a six-month jail term to a lawyer on a contempt of court charge for his misconduct towards a judge.

During Monday's hearing, LHC Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan sentenced Goraya to six months in jail, fined him Rs100,000 and ordered his immediate imprisonment.

The chief justice had received a reference from Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmad who alleged that advocate Zahid Mahmood Goraya had misbehaved during a hearing. After being served a show-cause notice, Goraya appeared before the chief justice and tendered an unconditional apology the previous week, but Justice Khan indicted him under contempt charges. In a subsequent hearing, Goraya, accompanied by his lawyer, LHC Bar Association President Asad Manzoor Butt, and Punjab Prosecutor General Farhad Ali Shah, pleaded for adjournment until after Eidul Fitr, expressing remorse and seeking forgiveness.

## Punjab govt to roll out network of rehab centers to treat, cure ailing wildlife: Marriyum



LAHORE (APP): Senior Minister Punjab, Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday said that government of the Punjab would roll out a province wide network of rehabilitation centers to treat and cure ailing wildlife being poached and mutilated for entertainment purposes and enhance public education and awareness on biodiversity with the technical assistance of Four Paws.

The senior Punjab Minister visited the Margallah Wildlife Rescue Centre erstwhile Islamabad Marghazar Zoo to view the newly rehabilitated black bears being rescued by the Punjab Wildlife Department on the special directives of the Chief Minister Punjab and held a press talk, where she was flanked by Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, Chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), Rina Saeed Khan and team of Four Paws' experts busy in treating the rescued bears.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister Punjab have initiated combing operations against poached wild animals, whereas the Punjab Wildlife Department rescued six dancing black bears who were in a pathetic condition. There were three raids conducted in a row which resulted into a series of actions being underway to curb the menace of illegal wildlife trafficking and poaching, she added.

The IWMB has been working on wildlife preservation, whereas the Four Paws team had reached on their own expenses from Bulgaria, Austria and Germany to treat the maltreated animals, she said.

"It is against CITES (international convention on illegal wildlife trade) and our wildlife laws. But it is unfortunate to know that there has been no wildlife rescue center across Punjab to rehabilitate the bears."

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Merchants of death

In an increasingly rights conscious world professing allegiance to humanity, the situation in Gaza stands as perhaps the worst contradiction, fuelled by Israel's relentless military invasion. The recent call by the UN Human Rights Council to halt arms sales to Israel — although a procedural admonition for some critics — is a desperate cry for sanity in a conflict that has spiralled into what can only be called an extermination campaign. The facts are undeniable: over 33,000 lives snuffed out, tens of thousands more maimed, and those who are left are on the brink of famine, living off fewer than 245 calories a day. The Netanyahu government's actions highlight a flagrant disregard for international law and the principles of human decency. The employment of starvation as a method of warfare, the use of AI to target densely populated areas, and the denial of essential humanitarian aid to 2.4m Palestinians have effectively rewritten the rules of warfare. The tragic incident involving the World Central Kitchen, where a targeted strike killed seven aid workers, six of whom were foreigners, encapsulates the impunity of Israel's military operations. The event prompted a rare rebuke from US President Joe Biden, who has now hinted at a potential shift in US policy. However, this should not have been the threshold for international outrage. The fact that it took the deaths of these particular individuals to move Washington is a damning indictment of selective empathy and the disproportionate weight of Western blood over that of the Palestinian people. The US, by continuing arms sales to Israel — it reportedly approved bombs the very day the strike occurred — is complicit in the bloodshed. A continuation of this death-dealing would further sink the country's stated commitment to justice and human rights on the global stage. Meanwhile, Israel's temporary permission for aid delivery into Gaza, following intense US pressure, is a minuscule gesture in the face of the broader atrocities committed. Such measures are akin to placing a band-aid on a haemorrhage; they fail to address the root cause of the conflict or the systemic violence perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinians. The need for a paradigm shift in how the international community, particularly the US, approaches the Israel-Palestine conflict is long overdue. It is not enough to condemn actions post-facto or to issue slap-on-the-wrist warnings devoid of substantive action. There must be a concerted effort to halt arms sales to Israel and to hold it accountable for its violations of international law, something it has long become accustomed to. In the words of UN Secretary General António Guterres "nothing can justify the collective punishment" in Gaza. It has been six long months. The destruction, the bloodlust, the war must end, and they must end now.

Human hierarchies

Zarrar Khuhro

We have witnessed horrors over the past six months. We have seen entire families decimated at the press of a button. We have seen entire bloodlines of Palestinians erased from the earth to slake Israel's bloodlust. We have seen hungry men and women rushing for aid only to be gunned down and then blamed for their own deaths. We have seen humans crushed flat by tanks and bulldozers. We have seen children hunted like mice through the ruins of Gaza, joyfully sniped by Israeli soldiers playing their murderous games, the same soldiers who — joyfully — pose with the lingerie of Palestinian women they have murdered or displaced. They proudly advertise their atrocities, filming TikToks where they mock their victims, eat their food, desecrate their homes, mosques and bodies. They are celebrated for it by a society suffering from a deep sickness of the soul, a country where trophies like the passport of a dead or displaced Gaza child is sold on Facebook, where IDF soldiers post pictures of themselves brutalising Palestinians on their dating profiles and get hundreds of matches from women excited by this display of barbarism. All this has happened with hardly a mention on Western mainstream media, and with the barest wringing of hands in Western capitals. And that's because there are hierarchies to human lives. There are some — mostly brown, mostly living in the Global South — who are born to be killed. Their lives are pointless, unworthy of comment or eulogy and in death they simply become statistics of the sort that can be easily ignored. Most of

the time, they aren't even killed; they simply die in unexplained explosions apparently caused by no one. Their children's lives are cut short by bullets that seemingly travel through time and space of their own volition. They don't really matter, and their deaths barely elicit a statement of concern from the worthies that run this world. We know this but the knowing brings us no solace, only sorrow. Proof, if we needed any, was supplied when the Israeli army 'triple-tapped' an aid convoy of the World Central Kitchen, killing brave and selfless aid workers who hailed not from the disposable countries but from the US, UK, Canada, Australia and Poland. This was, of course, 'unacceptable' and led to relatively loud condemnation of Israel with even the usually supine 'do you condemn Hamas/Israel has a right to defend itself' sections of the US media treating Israeli government spokespeople with the same ire they usually reserve for Palestinians who have lost their entire families. Prominently, the hosts of America's President Joe 'more Zionist than the Zionists' Biden's favourite show, Morning Joe, tore into Israel's minister of the economy for Israel's handling of the war in Gaza. Biden finally called for a ceasefire, reportedly threatened to condition future aid to Israel on how it addresses concerns and pressured Israel into opening the Erez crossing into Gaza, allowing a few trucks of aid in. This proved that American pressure could make Israel change course. But don't think for a moment that this is any lasting change of heart where Biden is concerned; he's too old and too rigid in his hawkish views to ever change. It

is, however, an indication of the pressure he now feels, given that Western citizens have been killed and that his chances of re-election seem dimmer. It also helps, of course, that the founder of the WCH, Jose Andre, is a well-known and well-connected figure in Washington, D.C. Just a day after Biden called for an 'immediate ceasefire', the politicians-for-hire of America step-ped up with choreographed messages of unconditional support for Israel. Politicians like Brad Sherman, the democratic Congressman, whom many Pakistanis recently became acquainted with, tweeted not just to exonerate Israel of blame but also to indirectly place the blame on WCH itself. This isn't surprising since Sherman is one of the many hired guns of Israel in the US Congress, and has received upwards of \$700,000 over his career from pro-Israel interest groups. Other known Israeli mouthpieces like Richie Torres (over a million dollars from pro-Israel groups) also chipped in as did Republican Ted Cruz and many others. Speaking of AIPAC and its allies, Biden stands out as the highest recipient of funds from pro-Israel lobbies, clocking over \$11m from various Israeli lobbies over the course of his career. Increasingly, though there are voices calling out AIPAC in the US, something that was unthinkable fairly recently, and these voices will only grow in volume. Change is coming, but slowly and with a lot of pushback. In the meantime, American citizens can take solace in the fact that if Israel were to kill them, the majority of the US political establishment would immediately rally to the defence of Israel. - Courtesy Dawn

The Rs400bn quandary

Basit Ghauri

The financial instability of distribution companies has led to a conundrum for decision-makers whereby the federal government, under the IMF programme, seeks to alleviate the burden of circular debt and considers shedding the Discos. On the other hand, the provinces and private sector remain cautious about assuming associated liabilities. Their fate remains unclear, as the Power Division, the Special Investment Facilitation Council, the Privatisation Commission, and the provinces fail to reach a consensus on the future of Discos. Discos are struggling, with multifaceted challenges and structural deficiencies within the broader power sector contributing to their financial instability. A uniform tariff regime equalises the tariff of all Discos based on a national average; it is subsequently reduced through government subsidies from the federal budget. Such regulatory hurdles and lack of corporatisation hold back competition for performance improvement, exacerbating financial woes. In FY2022, Discos reported a staggering net negative equity of Rs1,426 billion primarily driven by transmission and distribution losses of 16.3 per cent. Last year, low recovery rates and theft resulted in a staggering loss of Rs236bn. Abolishing this regime also risks social backlash and political repercussions, particularly in high-tariff areas. The culmination of these challenges manifests in annual net losses of Rs400bn, begging the question of how to proceed. Multiple options are being explored, including complete or partial privatisation, management contracting,

provincialisation, handing over to the army, or maintaining the status quo. Complete privatisation: The 1990s privatisation programme succeeded in privatising 167 entities worth about Rs476bn. However, recent attempts have largely failed, with only one success in the past decade. Successful privatisation demands strong political commitment, resolution of legacy contracts, settlement of liabilities, and negotiations with a sizable workforce. For instance, pressure from 3,500 employees at the Pakistan Steel Mills thwarted multiple privatisation attempts. With Discos employing over 100,000 individuals, gaining employee buy-in for any potential transaction appears highly unlikely. Further, KE's privatisation has been problematic, with the need for a massive Rs171bn subsidy last year due to regulated consumer tariffs. The current uniform tariff regulations provide little incentive for entities like KE to adopt cost-effective, cleaner alternatives. According to a study by Renewables First, an energy and climate think tank, integrating renewables into its generation mix could have saved KE \$457 million over the past two years. Moreover, aligning with liberalised market interventions, such as the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contracts Market, adds complexity. Since the wire business of Discos is a natural monopoly crucial to CTBCM success, determining the cost of using wires for bilateral contracts is a pertinent question. Also, corporatisation is essential, but some Discos lack formal boards, while others are intertwined with political affiliations. Concession model:

Concession models offer an alternative, permitting government ownership retention while outsourcing Disco operations to enhance efficiency. This public-private partnership model, akin to successful infrastructure projects in provinces such as Sindh, necessitates tailored approaches for each Disco, with awareness of potential job displacements. Provincialisation: Provincialisation as a so-called sector's circular debt addresses measures — the symptoms, and not the disease. Provincial capacity to manage Discos is the same as, if not less than, the federal government's. Imbalances could arise, with wealthier provinces subsidising tariffs, while others face increased tariffs, exacerbating economic disparities. For instance, Tesco (Tribal Areas Electric Supply Company) receives around Rs20bn in subsidies from the federal government for its expenses, with almost negligible recoveries. This makes up some 2pc of the provincial budget set aside for Tesco only. Although incorporating this amount into the NFC award has been proposed, historical issues with timely and complete NFC disbursements remain unresolved. Maintaining Disco's status quo may seem politically favourable but risks worsening the circular debt and relations with the IMF. Resolving Discos' issues requires assessing social and financial costs, managing assets, and building stakeholder consensus. Regardless of the chosen path, consumers will bear short-term costs, with substantive benefits materialising in the medium term. The government should adopt forward-looking strategies in consultation with stakeholders. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Pakistan faces average cost of Rs136bln per annum due to natural disasters: Speakers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speakers at a validation session on financial flow and gap analysis of public finance for disaster preparedness and response conducted by FAO Pakistan, a news release said. The analysis seeks to facilitate specific advocacy and capacity-building steps essential for enabling national, provincial, and district-level systems to finance and support Anticipatory Actions (AA). With a focus on both national and sub-national levels, particularly in Sindh province, the study looked into government climate and disaster risk financing mechanisms, tools, and flows.

Findings of the Financial Flow and Gap Analysis of Public Finance for Disaster Preparedness and Response conducted by FAO Pakistan, a news release said. The analysis seeks to facilitate specific advocacy and capacity-building steps essential for enabling national, provincial, and district-level systems to finance and support Anticipatory Actions (AA). With a focus on both national and sub-national levels, particularly in Sindh province, the study looked into government climate and disaster risk financing mechanisms, tools, and flows.

Janek Toepper, Climate Change and DRF Specialist, FAORAP, along with Syed Aftab Raza, Public Finance Management Consultant, presented key findings from the research analysis, shedding light on the Disaster Risk Finance for anticipatory action. Following this, Mubshar Hussain, Manager of Disaster Risk Reduction at NDRMF, discussed the Disaster Risk Financing Strategy and NatCat Model. Emphasizing the necessity for collaborative efforts among public, private, and international stakeholders.

BISP beneficiaries to receive financial assistance directly into bank accounts: SBP

Independent Report KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan, Monday, rolled out a facilitation framework to enable Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) beneficiaries receive financial assistance directly into their bank accounts. The central bank, in a statement issued here, said that the facilitation framework has been developed in consultation with the BISP and banks and under the framework banks accounts of BISP beneficiaries will be opened in all banks and Micro Finance Banks across the country. The decision has been taken to onboard BISP

beneficiaries for receiving the social welfare payment into their accounts and under the framework, about 9.3 million BISP beneficiaries will be able to open a "BISP Sahulat Account" in a single visit to the designated bank branch within their vicinity. The BISP has mapped its beneficiaries with a bank branch in the vicinity of the beneficiaries. However, given the large number of beneficiaries, the framework will be implemented in phases. Initially, a pilot phase will be run in Karachi and Lahore for onboarding about 300,000 BISP beneficiaries and after successful implementation of the pilot phase.

Rupee sheds 02 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday witnessed a devaluation of 02 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs277.94 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.92. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.3 and Rs280.4 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 09 paise to close at Rs301.07 against the last-day closing of Rs301.16, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas an increase of 10 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded.



LAHORE: Members of Kissan Board Pakistan are holding protest demonstration against wheat support price, in Lahore.

Farooq Shaikhani emphasizes pivotal role of private sector to revitalize institutions

HYDERABAD (APP): President Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry Farooq Shaikhani, emphasizes the pivotal role of the private sector worldwide in revitalizing declining institutions through their unwavering commitment, innovation and embrace of new technologies, however suggested that in Pakistan, government institutions should adequately support and incentivize the private sector as well. He stated that the official rate for a 100 kg sack of wheat has been set at Rs. 10,000. However, following this decision, the

price of wheat in the open market has subsequently decreased, resulting in direct financial setbacks for farmers. He highlighted Pakistan's significant position as the fifth-largest wheat-cultivating nation globally. However wheat shortages and fluctuating flour prices, ultimately impacts both the public and traders. President Chamber Farooq Shaikhani stressed the need to engage the private sector in wheat procurement, aligning with Islamic banking principles. Such involvement promises enhanced efficiency in the

procurement process, as private enterprises typically boast streamlined operations driven by profit incentives. He urged that incorporating the private sector would foster improved market integration, aligning wheat procurement with demand and supply dynamics for timely distribution and response to market fluctuations. He emphasized that engaging the private sector would enhance farmers' welfare by enabling them to receive competitive rates from private buyers, thereby improving their livelihoods and fostering increased productivity.

Eid shopping reaches its peak in city markets

RAWALPINDI (APP): The shopping in city markets for Eid-ul-fitr reached its peak on Monday and the traders in the city markets were happy with a large turnout of the customers. A festive environment was noticed at the busy shopping centers including Tench Bhatta, Saddar, Lalkurti, Moti Bazar, Commercial Market and several other markets of the town. The shopkeepers and their helpers were busy till late night on Saturday and Sunday, in managing the customers, showing them the goods and bargaining with them. The families were seen to throng the markets

to pick up their choices for Eid on Saturday and Sunday. The shopkeepers of different malls and other markets said that their business on Saturday and Sunday was better than other days of this Ramadan. Varieties of goods, including foreign brands, particularly Chinese, are found in abundance. The shops are flooded with garments for men, women and children, with the latest designs, particularly for children. The rush of the customers at the shopping centers nowadays starts from evening and continue till closing of the shops before sehri.



LAHORE: Vice President Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry Adnan Khalid Butt meeting with Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman.

163rd BoD meeting of PIEDMC held

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Industrial Estates Development and Management Company (PIEDMC) Chairman Javed Iqbal here Monday presided over the 163rd meeting of the PIEDMC Board of Directors. The board approved the sale plan of Bahawalpur Industrial Estate. The meeting also approved the design and cost of the main gates of the Quaid-e-Azam Business Park; the audited accounts of the company for the years 2021 and 2022; the terms of references of the working committees; and the concept paper of the Green Energy Initiatives. The Board also

approved obtaining a license from PTA to provide telecommunication services in Quaid-e-Azam Business Park; formation of the special committee to acquire land for a new grid station in Sunder Industrial Estate; and initiating the process to fill the vacant statutory seats of the company. While addressing the meeting Chairman PIEDMC Javed Iqbal said that speedy measures were being taken to promote industrial development in Punjab. Special focus is being given to the timely completion of development projects and the provision of facilities to the industrialists under one roof.



LAHORE: Finance Minister of Punjab Mujtaba Shujaat Rehman presiding over 1st meeting of Cabinet Standing Committee for Legislative Business & Privatization.

# Minister inaugurates facilities for mentally challenged children

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Sohail Shaukat Butt marked a significant milestone with the inauguration of special residential facilities for mentally challenged children at the Chamman institution.

During his visit to the Chamman Institution here on Monday, he also laid the foundation stone of hostel, special washrooms and mess in the building.

Sohail Shaukat Butt personally interacted with the children, distributed Eid gifts, and expressed heartfelt affection towards them. Witnessing the joy on the children's faces upon receiving toys was a heartwarming moment for

all present.

Sohail Shaukat Butt emphasized the importance of the project, which is a result of a public-private partnership with the M u s h a l - e - R a a h Foundation. He expressed gratitude to Chairperson Mushal-e-Rah Amina Aftab for their unwavering support towards this noble cause.

The minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing the best possible care for these special children, stating that these children are the flowers in our garden, and it is our duty to nurture and protect them. "We will spare no effort in ensuring they receive the attention

and facilities they deserve."

The minister also addressed the issue of violence against women, announcing the upcoming launch of the 1737 helpline dedicated to the rescue and assistance of women facing litigation and violence. The "CM Punjab Women Protection Helpline" aims to support vulnerable and oppressed women, alongside stringent legislation to combat violence against domestic workers.

The inauguration of these special facilities at the Chamman institution marks a significant step towards providing a supportive environment for mentally challenged children, he concluded.



**LAHORE: Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique, Khawaja Imran Nazir, Mujtaba Shujaur Rehman, Rana Sikandar Haya and Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman presiding over 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Cabinet Committee for deadly diseases.**

## FWMC deports 3500 workers, 150 vehicles for cleanliness during Eid

FAISALABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Faisalabad Waste Management Company (FWMC) Rauf Ahmad said that the company has deported more than 3,500 workers and 150 vehicles for cleanliness during Eid holidays.

During his visit to various mosques and Eidgahs here on Monday, he said that leaves of FWMC officers and officials were cancelled and the entire staff would remain available from April 10 to April 13 for immediate disposal of waste material during Eid days. He said that there were 758 mosques and

Eidgahs in Faisalabad and their routes and congregation sites would be cleaned and washed before Eid-ul-Fitr in addition to sprinkling anti-germ sprays.

He said that more than 3500 workers and 150 vehicles would remain active during Eid days.

They would ensure mechanical sweeping of 100 kilometers roads in Faisalabad.

The people could contact the FWMC through its complaint cell 1139 which would remain active round-the-clock to receive and redress public complaints on urgent basis.

## Police finalizes security plan for Eid-ul-Fitar

KHANEWAL (APP): Police finalized security plan to maintain law and order during celebrations of Eid-ul-Fitar.

The District Police Officer (DPO) Rana Omer Farooq said that foolproof security arrangements would be made during Eid and law violations would not be tolerated at any cost.

He said that more than 648 police officials would be deployed on security duty at 461 Masjid and 51 Imambarahs across the district.

On the other hand, Elite force would continue patrolling in the areas for quick response in any emergency like situation, he added.

# Members of global animal welfare organisation calls on senior minister

LAHORE (APP): A four-member experts team of Austria-based global animal welfare organisation, Four Paws, called on Senior Minister Punjab Marriyum Aurangzeb at Margalla Wildlife Rescue centre and discussed different issues, including wildlife conservation, breeding, ecosystem provision, technical assistance, provision and use of modern medical equipment and capacity building of the Punjab Wildlife Department's staff.

Four Paws's Director (Operations) Dr Amir Khalil, Dr Ivanov, Dr Frank Gorritz, and Welzer Englof arrived in Pakistan for the medical treatment of eight black bears as per the special request of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board for animal treatment. The senior minister expressed gratitude for the visit of the Four Paws team to Pakistan, treatment of wildlife and cooperation in wildlife conservation efforts. The senior minister stated that public awareness campaigns would be launched regarding wildlife conservation.



**PESHAWAR: Newly elected Minority MPA Gopal Singh meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali.**

# Largest Namaz-e-Eid gathering to be held at Gulshan-e-Jinnah at 8 a.m

KARACHI (APP): The largest Namaz-e-Eidul Fitr gathering under the management of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) will be held in Gulshan-e-Jinnah (Old Polo Ground), here at 8 a.m.

The flags of different Muslim countries are being raised to express solidarity. Apart from cleanliness around the Eid Gah, the entrance and exit routes are also being made better for the faithfuls. Strict security arrangements have been made for Eid prayers.

Along with arrangements for abluion for the citizens coming for Eidgah, cleaning and disinfecting spray will also be performed.

Jinnah. According to the instructions of Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab, arrangements are being completed for the Eid-ul-Fitr gathering at the Old Polo Ground.

Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab, Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, Municipal Commissioner S.M Afzal Zaidi, diplomats of Islamic countries, members of national and provincial assemblies, various social and political leaders and a large number of dignitaries of the city will offer Eid prayers at Gulshan-e-



**PESHAWAR: A large number of vehicles stuck in traffic jam at Saddar market while people busy in shopping as they are preparing for the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitar coming ahead, in Peshawar.**

# Sindh Doctors Association UK, NDF distributes wheelchairs, tricycles in Nawabshah

NAWABSHAH (APP): Sindh Doctors Association UK distributed wheelchairs and tricycles to deserving disabled people through the local partner organization NDF Pakistan Nawabshah here on Monday.

On this occasion, eminent social activist Abid Lashari, acknowledged the efforts of Sindh Doctors especially Dr. Shah Bux Lashari, Dr. Fahad Memon, Dr. Shahabuddin Kalhor and

## One robber killed, 3 injured and held after encounter

KARACHI (INP): One robber was killed and three injured and held with arms and looted valuables after exchange of fire here in the metropolis on Monday.

According to details, three armed robbers barged into a bungalow in Gulshan-e-Mehmar area of Karachi.

The police getting the information cordoned off the bungalow and an exchange of fire took place in which one robber was killed while two others were critically injured and held. The police recovered three pistols, ammunition, looted jewelry, cash and cell phones from possession of the killed and arrested robbers. Meanwhile, another robber was injured and held during an encounter at Shah Faisal Bridge. Arms, four snatched cell phones and other valuables were recovered from his possession. The body and injured robbers were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases at respective police stations started investigations.

## DCs, DPOs directed to ensure prevention of aerial firing

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner, Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsud has directed the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and District Police Officers (DPOs) of all districts of the division, authorities of traffic police, Water Supply & Sanitation Programme (WSSP) and administrative officers of the Capital Metropolitan Government also attended the meeting. Divisional Commissioner directed Police in all districts of the division to begin patrolling from the afternoon of the day of moon-sighting night and beside police.

on Monday. Besides, the Deputy Commissioners (DCs), District Police Officer (DPOs) of all districts of the division, authorities of traffic police, Water Supply & Sanitation Programme (WSSP) and administrative officers of the Capital Metropolitan Government also attended the meeting. Divisional Commissioner directed Police in all districts of the division to begin patrolling from the afternoon of the day of moon-sighting night and beside police.

## 1085 vehicles inspected, fines imposed

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration and the Transport Department have inspected a total of 1085 vehicles and 59 transport terminals.

Fines were imposed on 372 vehicle owners, and FIRs were registered against six managers of bus terminals during the last three days.

The authorities have issued warnings to 78 transporters, while 16 were arrested for overcharging. Inspections were carried out at various transport terminals, including General Bus Stand.

# International News

## At least 94 dead in Mozambique after unlicensed ferry boat capsizes

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOZAMBIQUE: At least 94 people died, including children, and 26 are missing after a ferry boat capsized off the northern coast of Mozambique, an official from the country's Maritime Transport Institute (INTRASMAR) said.

The vessel was an overloaded fishing boat and was not licensed to transport people, Lourenco Machado, an administrator of INTRASMAR, said on state television on Monday.

"On Sunday we registered a maritime incident where at least 94 people died when a barge carrying 130 people capsized. We have recovered 94 bodies and 26 are missing," he said.

The boat was ferrying people from Lunga in Nampula province to

Mozambique Island, he said, adding that initial reports indicated that it was hit by a tidal wave.

The passengers were fleeing a cholera outbreak, said state broadcaster TVM, citing another local maritime administrator.

Jaime Neto, secretary of state for Nampula province, also said that the passengers were fleeing cholera, according to the British Broadcasting Corp (BBC).

"Because the boat was overcrowded and unsuited to carry passengers, it ended up sinking," he told the BBC, adding that many children were among the dead.

Videos posted on social media X showed many bodies lying on a beach and some people carrying the bodies of children. Reuters

could not immediately verify these videos.

Mozambique and other countries in Southern Africa have been battling cholera outbreaks since last year.

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**Boat that sunk off the north coast of Mozambique killing 96 people on the Island of Mozambique.**

## Iran FM opens new Syria consulate after deadly Israeli strike

**Monitoring Desk**  
DAMASCUS: Iran's foreign minister inaugurated the country's new consulate in Damascus on Monday, a week after a deadly strike blamed on Israel destroyed the former premises, sending regional tensions skyrocketing.

Tehran, a key Damascus ally, has vowed to avenge last Monday's air strike on the Iranian embassy's consular section that killed seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) members, including two generals.

The strike came against the backdrop of Israel and Hamas's ongoing fighting, which began with the group's October 7 attack on Israel.

Damascus and Tehran blame Israel for last Monday's raid, but it has not commented. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian inaugurated the new consular section in a Damascus building in the presence of his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad, whom he also met earlier on Monday, state news agency SANA said.

## Russian FM Lavrov due in China today

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit China on Monday and Tuesday, his ministry said in a statement.

"On April 8 and 9, the foreign affairs minister ... will undertake an official visit in the People's Republic of China, during which discussions with... [his Chinese counterpart] Wang Yi are planned," it said on Sunday. "An in-depth exchange of points of view is expected on a certain number of 'burning subjects'," the statement said, citing "the Ukrainian crisis and the situation in the Asia-Pacific region".

## Russia says Ukraine struck nuclear plant, Kyiv denies it was behind the attack

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russia said Ukraine struck the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station controlled by Russian forces three times on Sunday and demanded the West respond, though Kyiv said it had nothing to do with the attacks.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which has experts at the site, said it was the first time the nuclear plant, Europe's largest, was directly targeted since November 2022 and said the attack had endangered nuclear safety.

Russian forces took control of the plant in 2022 shortly after their full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Both Moscow and Kyiv have repeatedly accused each other of risking a nuclear accident by attacking the plant. Russia's state nuclear corporation, Rosatom, said

Ukraine attacked the plant three times on Sunday with drones, first injuring three near a canteen, then attacking a cargo area and then the dome above reactor No 6.

"Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station has been subjected to an unprecedented series of drone attacks, a direct threat to the safety of the plant," Rosatom said. "The radiation levels at the plant and the surrounding area have not changed," it said.

A Ukrainian intelligence official said Kyiv had nothing to do with any strikes on the station and suggested they were the work of Russians themselves. "Russian strikes, including imitation ones, on the territory of the Ukrainian nuclear power plant ... have long been a well known criminal practice of the invaders."

## People's Liberation Army conducts military drills in South China Sea

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China conducted military "combat patrols" on Sunday in the disputed South China Sea, its army said, the same day as joint drills by the Philippines, the United States, Japan and Australia.

The announcement comes one day after defence chiefs from four countries including the Philippines — which has been engaged in several contentious maritime disputes with Beijing recently — said they would conduct joint drills in the area.

Beijing's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theater Command said it was organising "joint naval and air combat patrols in the South China Sea". "All military activities that mess up the situation in the South China Sea and create hotspots are under control," it said in a statement, in an apparent swipe at the other drills being held in the waters.

Further details about the Chinese military activities in the waterway were not announced.

The exercises take place days before US President Joe Biden is due to hold the first trilateral summit with the leaders of the Philippines and Japan. Top US officials have repeatedly declared the United States' "ironclad" commitment to defending the Philippines against an armed attack in the South China Sea — to the consternation of Beijing. China claims territorial sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea and has been increasingly assertive in the region in recent years. China's Coast Guard said it had "handled" a situation on Thursday at a disputed reef where several ships from the Philippines were engaged in "illegal" operations.



**People watch the solar eclipse on the lawn of Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles, California, U.S.**

## Millions across North America await total solar eclipse

**Monitoring Desk**  
MAZATLAN: A total solar eclipse will have millions of people across a heavily populated swath of North America gazing toward the heavens on Monday. However, the celestial event will not be visible in Pakistan or India.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), the eclipse will be visible from the west in "Europe, North

America [and] north in South America, Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic."

"However it will be not visible in Pakistan," it added.

Meanwhile, Hindustan Times reported that the total solar eclipse would also not be visible in India. The eclipse will be viewable, weather permitting, along a path starting in Mexico and then crossing through the United States and into Canada.

## Footage shows a lively Gaza turned to wasteland since war began

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA: Drone footage of Gaza over the six months of warfare between Israel and Hamas shows how the once vibrant Palestinian enclave has been transformed into a vast wasteland of rubble and twisted steel by Israeli bombardment. During normal days, Palestinians used to be able to stand on their buildings' balconies and take in a view of the Mediterranean Sea.

Those structures have vanished, footage from Reuters and other sources shows, crushed into piles of cement and debris. Residents have been forced to wander Gaza seeking shelter from an Israeli offensive designed to destroy its arch enemy Hamas.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the campaign will not stop until Hamas is eliminated, so the bombardment and destruction are expected to continue.

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## Maulana Ashrafi commends PM Sharif's Saudi visit for strengthening economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmoed Ashrafi on Monday lauded Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, highlighting its potential to foster economic cooperation and fortify bilateral relations between the two nations.

In a media talk, he said both the countries are keen in expanding their partnership in various sectors. Ashrafi emphasized the significance of prime minister's diplomatic outreach, particularly in the realm of economic cooperation adding that the visit holds the promise of unlocking new avenues of economic opportunities for both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Highlighting historical, cultural, and religious bonds, he expressed optimism that the discussions held during the visit would yield tangible results leading to enhance collaboration in diverse fields, including trade, investment, and infrastructure development. He commended the prime minister's proactive approach in exploring avenues for cooperation and advancing bilateral ties to new heights.

He said in the meeting between prime minister and crown prince, a comprehensive discussion was also held regarding the escalating situation in Gaza and the ongoing crisis in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The meeting, aimed at addressing regional instability and promoting peace, emphasized the importance of international intervention to halt Israeli aggression and ensure compliance with international law. Ashrafi said both leaders expressed grave concerns over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and stressed the need for the international

community's involvement. They called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, access to humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza, and adherence to international legal frameworks, he added.

Furthermore, the leaders reiterated their commitment to advancing the peace process in line with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, Ashrafi said adding that they emphasized the necessity of achieving a comprehensive solution that includes the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

In addition to the Gaza crisis, he said the leaders also delved into the longstanding issue of IIOJK. Recognizing the significance of resolving this conflict for regional peace and stability, Ashrafi said, they engaged in detailed discussions aimed at finding peaceful solutions of lingering dispute between India and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to PM on Climate change Romina Khurshid Alam holds meeting with chairperson IWMB Rina Saeed Khan along with experts from Four Paws International to discuss bio rescue and Rehab Centre.

## Pakistan, Ethiopia agree to address climate change jointly

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Ethiopia on Monday agreed to launch the Green Legacy Initiative of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed in the major cities including Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi, Quetta, Sialkot and others.

This was agreed upon in a meeting between Coordinator to the PM on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam and Ethiopian Ambassador to Pakistan Jamal Beker Abdula, said a news release.

Ambassador lauded the role played by Romina Khurshid Alam in initiating a joint collaboration between Ethiopia and Pakistan last year for addressing climate related issues.

He recalled the launch of Green Legacy Initiative in Islamabad last year in the presence of senior ministers, government officials, diplomatic corps, business community, media and civil society.

The Ambassador stressed the need for enhanced collaboration between the two countries to address climate issues through skills, technology, information and knowledge sharing.

He said the government of Ethiopia stood ready to work together with the Pakistani government in addressing climate-related issues such as floods, food insecurity and others.

Ethiopia would extend all-out support to Pakistan on climate mitigation through technological transfer and experience sharing, the ambassador remarked.

He also congratulated Romina Khurshid Alam on assuming the charge of the Coordinator to the PM on Climate Change.

Romina Khurshid Alam expressed keen interest in the launch of the Green Legacy initiative in different cities of her country. She said the climate change was a global phenomenon and joint efforts against climate changes were the need of hour.

The government of Pakistan was looking forward to working with Ethiopia to deal with climate change, she added.

## Eid preparations reach its climax

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Eid-ul-Fitr is just around the corner, majority of the people are giving last minute touch to their preparations through visiting the shopping malls and local markets of the federal capital to celebrate this auspicious occasion in a befitting manner.

In various commercial hubs such as Super Market, Jinnah Super, Karachi Company, F-10 Markaz and popular shopping malls, shoppers have been flocking since noon to finalize their shopping amidst prayers and fasting.

Several women can be witnessed in the main markets and shopping malls of the capital looking for dresses, shoes, and other essential accessories to celebrate the Eid festivities in a befitting manner, taking advantage of the Eid sales.

Saira Qasim, a mother of three children, said, "I have completed shopping for my family earlier thinking that there will be more people during the last days before Eid and the required sizes of dresses and shoes may not be available."

Talking to APP, she said, "Although the online shopping platforms have made it easier for many to shop while sitting at their homes during fasting but still visiting the market physically for Eid shopping has its own charm."

Ansha Mehmood, a young girl, said, "I bought my Eid dress and shoes from the nearest shopping mall, availing of the sale offers. Now I have to buy just bangles, jewelry, and henna on the 'Chaand Raat' with my friends."

She said, "I always try to buy dresses and shoes by the middle of Ramzan as all the good stuff is sold out during the last few days before Eid, while the tailors also stop taking orders during the last week of Ramzan as they also leave for native towns."

Hira Iftikhar, who is a government employee, said, "Shopping during the month of Ramzan is a difficult task, so I am trying to complete it so that I can focus on prayers to seek blessings from Allah during the last Ashra of the holy month."

The prevailing inflation has limited the purchasing capacity of the salaried class, so I completed all shopping for my family at a local market, she said while talking to APP. Eid-ul-Fitr is the biggest festival for all Muslims across the world, and Muslims celebrate this festival with great religious zeal and enthusiasm.



ISLAMABAD: A view of deserted Islamabad expressway due to Eid Ul Fitr Holidays in the Federal Capital.

## Majority of natives move to inbred towns leaving capital deserted

ISLAMABAD (APP): With only a single day left in the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, the majority of the natives have left for their hometowns to celebrate the festival with their families and relatives leaving the capital city deserted, like every year.

A number of people residing in the capital for job purposes belong to the far-flung areas of the country and rush to their native towns to celebrate the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr with their relatives.

Taking advantage of the official holidays announced from April 10 (Wednesday) to April 12 (Friday), majority of the natives took two-day leave on April 08 (Monday) and April 09 (Tuesday) to combine weekends back and forth, to spend maximum time with their families.

"I left for my hometown in Multan after performing my official duty on Friday to spend quality time with my parents who were anxiously waiting for me for a long", Saad Rafique, a government employee said. "It is difficult to travel to my hometown frequently due to increased petrol prices so visiting there only for five days including traveling time does not seem logical, therefore I took leave of Monday and Tuesday to combine weekend holidays too", he said while talking to APP.

Farhat Jabeen, who is a doctor by profession, said: "I left for my hometown in Kashmir on Friday to celebrate the festival with my family and relatives.

## Naqvi condemns Khuzdar blast, regrets loss of precious lives

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi strongly condemning the Khuzdar blast has expressed deep sorrow and regret over the loss of precious lives.

In a message on Monday, the interior minister expressed heartfelt sympathies and condolences to the families of the martyrs and prayed for bereaved families to bear this loss with fortitude.

Mohsin Naqvi prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured in the blast.

He said that the government, security forces and the people were determined in the war against terrorism and this scourge will be eradicated from the land of Pakistan.

## Abbasi approaches ECP to form new political party

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who has parted ways with the PML-N, approached the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday for the registration of a new political party.

According to sources, the disgruntled PML-N leader has submitted the necessary documents to the ECP in this respect.

During an informal interaction with a group of journalists, the former premier said that all necessary documents have been provided to the ECP for the registration of a new political party, he former prime minister further said that the new political party would participate actively in the upcoming elections.

Political parties are registered under the Election Act 2017.

## SFP holds peace through sports day

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Softball Federation of Pakistan (SFP) organised a special event on the occasion of "Peace Through Sports Day" celebrated under the International Olympic Committee and the United Nations.

Addressing the occasion, former Pakistan hockey captain Olympian Islahuddin Siddiqui said the purpose of celebrating Peace Through Sports Day was to spread the message of peace in the whole world through sports, said a press release.

Pakistan Olympic and Softball Federation is showing its determination by waving white cards on this day to spread the message of peace and love from this platform to the whole world, he said.

Special Olympics Pakistan Chairperson Ronak Lakhani said Pakistan was a sports-loving nation. Sports is an important means of establishing peace and reconciliation. Through sports, people from different cultures, religions, nationalities and languages are brought to a platform to spread the message of peace to the whole world, Lakhani said.

Softball Federation President Asif Azeem said sports was a powerful tool for bringing people together and building peace, it promotes friendship and draws lines of respect across borders.

The Federation Vice President Farah Saeed said we have to play our part to encourage healthy lifestyles and make sports widely accessible.

Chairperson Yasmeen Haider said people learn the values of dignity, teamwork, and tolerance of their competitors when people participate in sports activities. And learn to respect the importance of fair play and rules.

## Ceremony held for passed-out departmental promotion courses officials

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: A ceremony was held in honor of the second Upper Course, 12th Intermediate Course, and 21th Lower Course passed out by officials at Police Lines Headquarters Islamabad, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the ceremony was attended by Capital Police Officer (CPO) Law and Order/Commandant Capital Police College Shaker Hussain Dawar, while high-ranking officials, including the SSP

who demonstrated exceptional performance during the training courses.

Addressing the ceremony, CPO Shaker Hussain Dawar praised the dedication and hard work of the officers and cadets who had completed the training courses successfully. He urged them to perform their duties with diligence, dedication, and a commitment to serving the community.

CPO expressed his delight at being part of the Islamabad Capital Police passing out ceremony and

tomate to have been given the opportunity by Allah to serve the community. Remember that the true honor comes from serving the people.

Upholding the law, ensuring justice, and safeguarding the lives and properties of citizens are our primary responsibilities. Show respect to the public, and there will be no reason left why you should not receive respect in return," he added.

CPO Shaker Hussain Dawar also expressed that



Law and Order/Dy. Commandant Capital Police College, DSP Capital Police College and other staff members.

During the ceremony, the CPO Shaker Hussain Dawar distributed awards and certificates to the deserving officers and cadets

congratulated Capital Police College for providing top-notch training to officers and cadets in record time. He emphasized the significance of public service and encouraged the attendees to uphold the high values of law enforcement.

He said, "You are for-

the skills learned during the training would be put into practice, making officers and cadets valuable assets to the police force and the community. He also emphasized the need to modernize and strengthen the training programs at Capital Police College.

## Over 60% population residing disaster-prone lacks knowledge on catastrophic climate impacts

ISLAMABAD (APP): A recent survey-based research report launched on Monday here revealed that 60.7% of the population residing disaster-prone or vulnerable to climate impacts lacked knowledge on cataclysmic impacts on environmental degradation triggering serious natural disasters.

President Huqoq-ul-Ebaad Development Foundation (HEDF), Syed Muhammad Ashfaq launched the survey report titled "Climate Change Effects in Pakistan 2023" highlighting significant challenges posed by climate change here at the National Press Club.

While addressing media, he said the Foundation having Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with United Nations since 2014, and accredited with UNEP as Observer since 2018 has conducted its study under the supervision of expert international consultants being hired by the Transparency International.

He expressed hope that this report would not only serve as a testament to the urgency of addressing climate change but also as a guiding document for policymakers, environmentalists, and advocates alike.

The survey which is the feedback, experience and perception of the people of Pakistan, was conducted in 16 districts spanning over four provinces from November 15, 2023, to December 20, 2023, with 1,600 respondents (400 respondents from each Province). Some 100 respondents from each district took part in the survey.

It meticulously addressed crucial aspects, the questionnaire for survey based on 19 queries, such as rescue efforts, government response, climate awareness, community engagement, biodiversity, concerns about climate change, climate resilience efforts, government policies, climate education, and the Right to information (RTI) Further the report will also present you a critical analysis of Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017 with recommendations.

"The findings shed light on various aspects of vulnerability, relief efforts, awareness, and obstacles to effective climate action. Disabled individuals top the list (47.3%) for requiring special attention and support following flood disasters, followed by elderly people (19.0%) and women (17.5%). Local volunteers (30.2%) lead satisfactory relief efforts, followed by local NGOs (25.3%)."

## Eid-ul-Fitr preparations gain momentum in Swat

**By Haroon Siraj**  
SWAT: - The preparations for upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr have started gaining momentum with each passing day as a huge number of buyers are seen in the prominent shopping markets of the district.

Despite rising inflation and escalating prices of the garments, clothes, shoes and other accessories, Eid shopping is registering an upward trend in the markets. The illuminated shopping malls and markets displaying stalls of colourful bangles, jewellery and henna outside the shops are attracting the buyers, mostly after Iftar.

Women shopping normally starts two weeks earlier as they have to prepare dresses, buy jewellery and other accessories to colour their religious festival with traditional zeal.

Many established and amateur dress and jewellery designers have started exhibiting their products at various galleries, houses and open-air lawns to attract the maximum number of women, providing them with a perfect fashion extravaganza.

Most rushes were seen at the city center, cheena markets and new road.

A bangle stallholder at a local market told our correspondent that "These days are not only a way to provide a variety of shopping opportunities for shoppers but also a great income generation opportunity for the stallholders. Any type of accessories relating to women and garments for children are the most profitable business, he added.

The last weeks of Ramadan also witnessed a huge rush at beauty salons and ready to wear boutique dresses. "I bought a pink dress and now looking for matching shoes and then I have to buy matching jewellery, hair clips, and bangles. I will again come with my family on 'chaand raat' for henna," Aiza Khan, who is five years old, said. "I have visited the market to buy bangles and observed that bangle stalls are very few and the prices are not affordable," she said.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of red rose flowers full blooming on a green belt at 7th Avenue in the Federal Capital.

## Foolproof security arrangement to be ensured; DIG HQs

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Operations Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari issued an important message to the general public regarding the security of markets and professional beggars on the occasion of Eid.

In his message, he stated that the Islamabad Capital Police's top priority is to protect the lives, property, and dignity of the public. Citizens are urged to discourage the professional beggars and not to give their charity to beggars and instead, give the charity and financial assistance to relief organizations.

He further said that, citizens should report information about professional beggars on the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or via the "ICT-15" app.

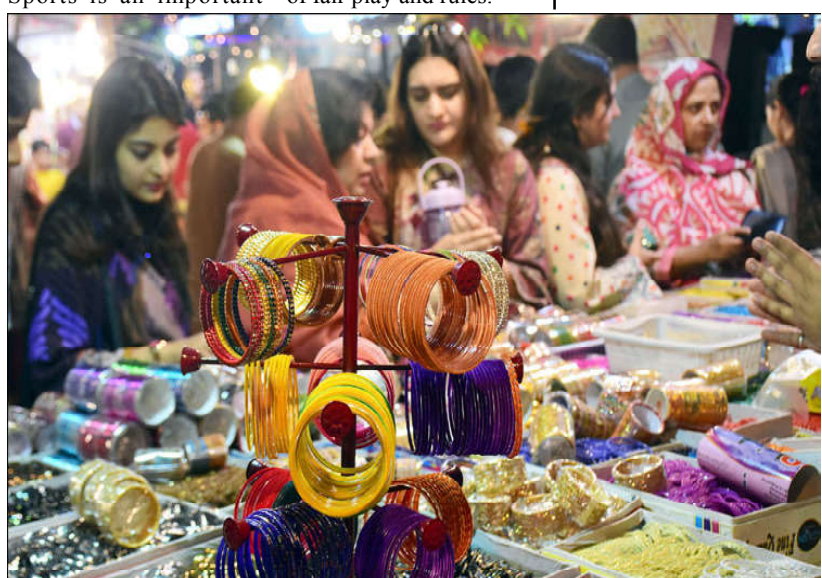
Similarly, if there are any issues during shopping in commercial centers and markets that harass you or pose security concerns, citizens should inform the police immediately, he added.

At the end, he said that, special teams of Islamabad Capital Police are deployed in commercial centers and markets to ensure the safety of citizens. Protection of citizens' lives and property is the utmost priority of Islamabad Capital Police.

and various markets of the city for public safety, while the Islamabad Capital Police has implemented a joint traffic and special patrolling plan to keep the smooth flow of traffic on capital roads.

Moreover, all the vehicles of police stations and falcons would patrol in their respective areas. Special security arrangements have been made for various public and worship places.

Parking will not be allowed near the worship places, strict checking of all entrances and exits of the city will be done, checking of various important places will be ensured through the Bomb Disposal Squad.



ISLAMABAD: Women busy in selecting traditional artificial jewelry and Mehndi for preparation of upcoming Eid ul Fitr, in the Federal Capital.