

# Independent

Member APNS &amp; CPNE

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Resolves to eliminate smuggling

## PM launches Shuhada Package for martyred federal govt officials

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday launched the Shuhada Package to support the families of the federal government officials martyred in the line of duty.

The prime minister announced the package during his visit to the family of late Customs Inspector Syed Hasnain Ali Tirmizi, who was martyred in a firing incident in Dera Ismail Khan a few days ago. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, PML-N leaders, and senior government officers were present.

PM Sharif handed over a cheque under the Shuhada Package to the family of martyred personnel and assured his government's all-out efforts for the security of the customs officials serving to purge the country of smuggling.

Offering Fateha for the

martyred soul and sympathizing with the bereaved family, he said that the Shuhada Package, earlier announced by the Punjab government, had now been extended to the federal government and could be revised further considering the country's financial position.

The package comprises cash assistance, housing allowance, free education and medical treatment. Under the package, the family members of a martyred sepoy will get Rs 10 million cash assistance and Rs 13.5 million housing allowance besides free education and medical treatment. The family of a martyred customs inspector will be entitled for a Rs15 million cash and Rs25 million housing allowance along with free education and medical facilities.

PM Sharif said the

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ABBOTTABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif handing over PM's Shuhada Assistance cheque to the father of Custom's Inspector Hussain Ali Tirmazi Shaheed.

## No complaints of judicial interference under my watch, says CJP

KARACHI (INP): Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Thursday said he had not received a single complaint from any high court judge about interference in judicial affairs since assuming the office.

The top judge was addressing Sindh High Court Bar Association (SHCBA). He said no one has reported any meddling in the judicial process to him, adding that all the incidents were taken place before the start of his tenure as CJP.

He categorically stated that interference in judiciary was not acceptable but at the same time set the record straight that he had not received any such complaint under his watch.

On March 25, six

judges of the Islamabad High Court wrote a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council regarding the "interference of intelligence agencies in judicial matters".

The letter was written by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Justice Saman Raffat Imtiaz. Later, the Supreme Court initiated suo motu proceedings on the IHC judges' letter and sought a proposal from the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC), the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), high courts and the federal government to address the issue.



QUETTA: Balochistan Home Minister, Mir Zia Langove laying wreath of flower on graveyard of martyrs.

## Role of police key in bringing peace and stability in Balochistan: Zia Lango

QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove has stated that there has been key role of Police force in bringing peace and stability in the province.

He said that the police is busy in establishing peace and protection of the life and property of the masses.

However, it's overall performance can be improved further by implementing the community policing in true letter and spirit.

The Provincial Minister was speaking on occasion of visit to the Central Police Office here on Thursday.

The Minister on the occasion assured that all re-

sources would be provided to the police force, but in return, we want to end crimes.

He regretfully pointed out that we have been failed in eliminating terrorism despite passage of over 25 years. He stressed that we have to make decisive war against terrorism.

He also appreciated the sacrifices of the forces saying that we are proud of them.

He said that peace is unavoidable for development and prosperity.

Earlier, the Minister was briefed about the performance of police besides other related matters. It was informed that work is going on the safe city project in other districts of the province.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti and Assistant Secretary General UNDP Kanni Wignaraja inaugurating UNDP-assisted project of construction of houses built for the flood affected people in the province.

## SC nullifies EC decision on suspension of speaker BA

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) while nullifying Election Commission (EC) decision regarding suspension of speaker Balochistan Assembly (BA) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai has restored him on his office.

A 3-member bench under Justice Amin ud Din Khan took up the case for hearing Thursday.

The court also nullified EC order for re-polling in 12 polling stations in PB-51 of Chaman.

## Nawaz ready to talk to Imran national interest: Rana

LAHORE (Online): PML-N leader Rana Sana Ullah has said Nawaz Sharif is ready to talk to Imran Khan for national interest.

In an interview with a private channel Rana Sana Ullah said Thursday that PML-N Quaid was ready for talks with Imran Khan and he proved it through his action.

He went on to say Nawaz Sharif extended invitation to Imran Khan for talks when 126 days dharna was underway.

He held Imran Khan popularity among the people is zero but he has got vote of resistance and sympathy during general election.

## 2 ring leaders among 3 terrorists killed in Khyber operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): The security forces on Thursday killed three terrorists including two ring leaders during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber District.

During the operation, an intense exchange of fire took place between the army troops and terrorists, which resulted in the killing of three terrorists including ring leaders Sohail alias Azmat and Haji Gul alias Zarkavi, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The terrorists' hideout was also busted during the operation, whereas weapons and ammunition were recovered. They remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

"Locals of the area appreciated the operation. The sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate terrorists, if any, found in the area as security forces are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country," the ISPR said.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar talking with under trainee officers of Pakistan Navy

## GoB & UNDP agree on mutual collaboration in various sectors in Balochistan province

Bugti says Balochistan facing challenge of climate change; Assistant Secretary General UNDP assures cooperation to provincial Govt. in climate change, education and health sectors

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan and United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) have agreed upon having mutual collaboration in different sectors in Balochistan province.

This was decided during meeting of Assistant Secretary General (ASG) of UNDP, Ms. Kanni Wignaraja with Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti whom she called on here at the CM's secretariat on Thursday.

During the course of meeting, the matters about cooperation of UNDP in different sectors of

Balochistan were discussed.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister said that Balochistan is facing challenge of climate change. However, we are working on the policy about climate change in the province.

He pointed out that the extraordinary rains are causing damages to the crops and mud houses in the province at large scale. The Chief Minister mentioned that work is continued on alternative means to meet requirements of energy.

He also pointed out towards the potential of investment Balochistan has saying that the province is suitable region for investment.

He said that the government is committed to provide all necessary facilities to the country's and international investors through one window operation under one roof.

Speaking on the occasion, UNDP's ASG said that district development plan has been formulated for 20 districts in Pakistan under the UNDP, which included 10 districts of Balochistan.

She mentioned that we are assisting the government in resettlement of the flood affected people as well as alternative sources of energy, rules of law and sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the province under UNDP.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti and Inspector General Motorway Police Salman Chaudhry exchanging souvenirs

## Govt determined to eradicate terrorism: Attaullah Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar Thursday informed the National Assembly that the government was determined to eradicate terrorism from the country.

In response to a calling attention notice regarding increase in incidents of suicidal bombing in different parts of country and increase in number of incidents of snatching, gunshots in Karachi, Hyderabad and Kashmir, he said, that fol-

lowing the Peshawar APS attack, the National Action Plan was devised with consensus among all stakeholders, and its implementation was promptly initiated.

The minister said that provinces extended cooperation to the federal government in executing the National Action Plan.

He highlighted the commencement of two successful operations, Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad, aimed at eradicating terrorism

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## Commander Pak Navy Central Punjab meets Abdul Wali Kakar: Unemployment & poverty can be ended by promoting border trade in Balochistan, believes Governor

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that the economic development and prosperity of Pakistan is linked with Balochistan. He believed that the issues of unemployment and poverty can be resolved by establishing border markets and promoting border trade in the province.

The Governor was speaking to the Commander of Pak Navy, Central Punjab, Rear Admiral Azhar Mehmood (Sitara-e-Imtiaz Military), who called on him here on Thursday. During the course of meeting, matters about development of coastal areas of the province as well as decorating children with ornament of education, strengthening border trade, law and order situation and prospects about sea trade were discussed.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor said that time has come to make bold decisions for economic development and political stability of country. He mentioned that Balochistan is rich province with natural resources and minerals. He said that although it is the area wise largest province of the country but it's population is scattered.

## Divorced from ground reality: Pakistan rejects US human rights report as biased and politicized

Contents of report are unjust, relying on inaccurate information and disconnected from ground realities, says FO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday categorically rejected the recently released 2023 Country Report on human rights practices issued by the US State Department terming its contents "unfair, based on inaccurate information and completely divorced from the ground reality".

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Bloch, in a statement, said that the US State Department's annual exercises of preparing such unsolicited reports lacked objectivity and remained inherently flawed in their methodology.

"These reports use a domestic social lens to judge human rights in other countries in a politically biased manner. This year's report is once again conspicuous by its lack of objectivity and politicization of the international human rights agenda," she added.

The spokesperson said the report clearly demonstrated the double standards thus undermining the international human rights discourse.

She said it was deeply

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Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf interacting with Naval Heads of various Navies during 19th Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao China.

## No compromise on rights of Balochistan: Chief Minister inaugurates project of construction of homes for flood affectees

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti inaugurated the UNDP-assisted project of construction of houses built for the flood affected people in the province.

Speaking after the inauguration ceremony of the project here at the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Thursday, the Chief Minister said that we are going to build 1,000 earthquake proof houses for the flood affectees in collaboration with UNDP.

He said that the houses to be built under the project would survive in the earth-

quake of 7.5 intensity. The Chief Minister announced that this model would be introduced in Ziarat where more earthquakes occur.

He asserted that no compromise would be made on rights of the province at all.

He said that we would speak to the federation on resolvable issues. He said that we believe in resolving the issues in polite manner.

He announced that the project is being started for rehabilitation of those affected due to floods in 2022. The Project Director of the Project has been appointed, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti added.



QUETTA: Provincial Education Minister Raheela Hameed Durrani, Prof. Kaleemullah Barech, Shah Ali Bugti and Nazeer Ahmed Lehri addressing a protest camp of Joint Action Committee UoB

## International driving licenses to be issued from DLA Quetta: IG NH&MP

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Inspector General of National Highway and Motorway Police (NH&MP), Salman Chaudhary has stated that the international driving licenses would be issued from the Driving Licensing Authority (DLA) Quetta office.

The test of youth of Balochistan regarding driving licensing would also be conducted according to the international standards from Quetta.

This was announced by the Inspector General of NH&MP while speaking to the media persons during his visit to the newly established building of DLA in Quetta on Thursday.

The IG NH&MP said that new building of DLA has been established in Quetta.

He said that with issu-

ance of international driving licenses from DLA Quetta, the youngsters would also get opportunities of employments abroad.

He said that the federal government is funding the building and other expenditures of DLA in Quetta.

The Inspector General of NH&MP was highly concerned about the road safety and termed it a big issue.

He pleaded to teach the subjects about road safety in educational institutions for prevention of the road accidents.

To a query, Chaudhary Salman said that the network of NH&MP is being expanded in Balochistan.

Earlier, he visited the new building of DLA where he was briefed about different sections besides its working.



## Govt committed to empower youth with modern tech, IT: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said the government was committed to empower the youth equipping them with modern technology and imparting the latest vocational training.

He was speaking at an event organized by the Ministry of Information Technology on the occasion of International Girls in Information Communication Technology (ICT) Day, to recognize contribution of female entrepreneurs in the field.

He said, "It is our hope and we expect that the youth will become entrepreneurs and open offices in cities like Karachi, Lahore and other places in Pakistan and other countries like Saudi Arabia, and information technology will become the biggest foreign exchange

earner for Pakistan."

He said, "We will make all investments required to achieve our goals in the field of information technology so that the youth can become bread earners for their families and foreign exchange earners for Pakistan."

He underlined the need for decreasing gender discrimination in the society, citing the example of Saudi Arabia where women were 40 percent of the workforce working in shopping malls, business houses, universities, and other places.

The prime minister said Pakistan was blessed with huge human resource in the shape of highly talented youth population of 15 to 30 years.

The youth were a great asset of Pakistan and it was an opportunity and challenge to utilize the young

population for the country's progress, he remarked.

He said fintech was playing an important role in increasing gross domestic product (GDP) of countries in the region including the Gulf states as with its help people were opening bank accounts in minutes and fast business transactions were taking place without any delay.

He said Pakistan would gain a bright future by utilizing emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and robotics. Earlier he gave away awards to women entrepreneurs and freelancers for their contributions in the field of information technology.

He expressed the hope that many more young entrepreneurs would emerge in the future and win laurels for the country.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by Chief Executive Officer of APM Terminals and Board Member AP Miller Mearsk Keith Svendsen calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Pakistan calls for addressing development changes at a key UN meeting

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has called for reforming the international financial architecture to effectively close the rich-poor gap and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Speaking in the Economic and Social Council's Financing for Development Forum, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said while there were broad blueprints to redress inequality and poverty, they were far from realization. "We do not lack solutions, but rather, we lack the political will to implement them," he said, pointing out the long-standing failures to fulfill the 0.7% ODA (Official Development Assistance) target and to mobilize \$100 billion in annual climate finance among only two examples.

The Forum's main aim is to prepare for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in 2025 from 30 June to 3 July in Spain.

On Wednesday, it held panel discussions on international trade as an engine for development; debt and debt sustainability; and addressing systemic issues.

## Islamic Summit Conference in Gambia on May 4; Palestine, Islamophobia, climate change on agenda

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will hold the 15th session of the Islamic Summit Conference on May 4-5 in the Gambian capital of Banjul to discuss variety of regional and global issues, including Palestine, Islamophobia, climate change and minorities.

The session will be held under the slogan "Enhancing Unity and Solidarity through Dialogue for Sustainable Development," according to a press release issued by the OIC General Secretariat.

The Islamic Summit Conference will be preceded by a preparatory meeting of senior officials on April 30 and May 1, which will discuss the documents of the session and submit its report to the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) preparatory for the Summit.

The preparatory CFM meeting will be held on May 1-2 to consider the results of the senior officials meeting and in turn, submit its report to the Summit.

## Senior army commanders pay tribute to DI Khan martyrs

RAWALPINDI (PR): In a display of solidarity and gratitude, senior army commanders visited the families of eight Customs officials who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty in two separate incidents in April in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the military's media wing said in a statement.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), senior army commanders



visited the martyrs' families at their home towns to express condolences, pay tribute, and pledge unflinching support on behalf of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

In response, the families of the martyrs expressed gratitude to the army for its support and respect during their time of grief.

Highlighting the significance of honouring martyrs and veterans, the ISPR emphasised that Shuhadas (martyrs) and Ghazis (war heroes) are the pride of the nation and their respect and honour is binding on each Pakistani.

"We must never forget that the peace and freedom we enjoy today is due to the ultimate sacrifices rendered by these brave sons of soil," said the statement.

The statement concluded with a heartfelt tribute to the families of the martyrs: "We as nation salute Shuhada families for sacrificing their loved ones for Pakistan."

## PM removes Chief Commissioner Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has removed Chief Commissioner (CC) Islamabad Capt (Retd) Anwar ul Haq from his post.

According to sources Muhammad Ali Randhawa is likely to be appointed as CC Islamabad after the removal of Capt (Retd) Anwar ul Haq from his office. Muhammad Ali Randhawa is grade-20 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service. Ghulam Murtaza, section officer Admn of interior ministry has written a letter to secretary establishment division stating interior ministry wants to use services of Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa as chief commissioner Islamabad or in CDA who is appointed as commissioner Lahore. Therefore his services be handed over to interior ministry.



QUETTA: A delegation of Secretariat Officers Association led by its President Abdul Malik Kakar meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Safaraz Bugti

## Bisma Maroof retires from all cricket

LAHORE (APP): Former captain Bismah Maroof on Thursday announced retirement from all cricket with immediate effect.

A left-handed batswoman, Bismah made her ODI debut against India in 2006 and her T20I debut against Ireland in 2009. She went on to represent Pakistan in 276 international matches, the most by any Pakistani women cricketer. She has scored 6,262 international runs, including 33 half-centuries, and has taken 80 international wickets with her right-arm leg-spin.

During her illustrious career, Bismah was part of the women's team that won the Gold Medal twice in the Asian Games, in the 2010 and 2014 editions.

The southpaw also captained the side in 96 international matches. She represented Pakistan in four editions of the ICC Women's 50-over World Cup (2009, 2013, 2017, and 2022), captaining the team in the 2022 edition held in New Zealand. In T20Is, Bismah featured for Pakistan in eight editions of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup (2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2023) and led the side in the 2020 and 2023 editions held in Australia and South Africa, respectively. "I have decided to retire from the game I love the most. It has been an incredible journey, filled with challenges, victories, and unforgettable memories."

"I want to express my gratitude to my family, who has supported me throughout my crickering journey, from the very beginning until now," Bisma acknowledged.

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## Govt determined...

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from the country.

Tarar said that after the operations, a significant decline was witnessed in terrorist incidents in the country.

He expressed regret over the lack of meetings and implementation of the National Action Plan by the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in 2018 to 2022.

The minister said that at that time, the court intervened to inquire about the delayed implementation from 2018 to 2022.

He alleged that the PTI-led governments held negotiations with the terrorists, hindering the National Action Plan's execution.

The minister reiterated the federal government's commitment to aiding provincial governments in combating terrorism and highlighted initiatives to bolster the Counter Terrorism Department's capacity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During his visit to Karachi, he said Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif discussed the Safe City project for the city with the Chief Minister Sindh.

Tarar said the Sindh Chief Minister assured the establishment of a Safe City camera network across Karachi.

He disclosed that a draft of the National Counter Violent Extremism 2024 policy had been submitted to the cabinet for approval.

He urged both the treasury and opposition benches of the parliament to unite against terrorism, emphasizing the importance of parliamentary solidarity in the fight against terrorism.

In response to another query, the minister said that Pakistan Army, intelligence agencies were cooperating with the provinces to address terrorism incidents, expressing optimism about a reduction in terrorism due to government measures.

He said that following the 18th amendment, it became the provinces' responsibility to work to improve law and order in the provinces.

## Mohsin Naqvi reconstitutes women's selection committee

LAHORE (INP): Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister for Interior and the Chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board has reconstituted the national women's selection committee, expanding it to seven members. This decision follows the disappointing performance of the Pakistan women's team against the West Indians.

Women, resulting in a 3-0 loss in the three-ODI series.

The retained members from the previous panel include Asmavia Iqbal and Marina Iqbal. Joining them are Abdul Razaq and Asad Shafiq (both members of the men's national selection committee) and former international player, Batool Fatima. In line with the men's national selection committee make-up, the coach and captain will also be part of the national women's selection committee.



QUETTA: A delegation of PPP meeting with acting Speaker Balochistan Assembly Ghazala Gola

## PM launches Shuhada Package for...

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package would also apply to civilian officials, police and law enforcement agencies.

In his interaction with the family members, the prime minister showed compassion and affection to the orphaned children and called them the "children of a hero".

He told the children that entire nation was proud over their "hero father".

The prime minister paid tribute to the late customs inspector who sacrificed his life while fighting against smuggling in a bid to save billions of dollars for the national economy.

He also lauded the patience and perseverance of the martyred customs inspector's father and apprised him of his government's ongoing efforts to curb smuggling, citing holding several meetings on the subject.

He said the Federal Board of Revenue, law enforcement agencies and interior ministry were working in collaboration to curb the menace of smuggling in cohesion with provincial institutions.

"The elimination of smuggling is as essential as the recovery of the national economy. Economic stability cannot be achieved without curbing the smuggling. This is my foremost responsibility as well as of my government," he remarked.

He also thanked Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, the provincial chief secretary, and Inspector General of KP Police for their support in the federal government's endeavour against smuggling so that people could use their produce and the country could earn foreign exchange through exports by legal means.

"I want to tell the federal and provincial government representatives that smuggling is our common enemy and we have to fight this out... Let us pledge not to spare any effort to curb smuggling to save billions of dollars for the national economy. If we set this goal, Allah will grant us success otherwise, we will be questioned on the day of judgment," the prime minister remarked.

The father of martyred Customs Inspector Hasnain Tirmizi thanked the prime minister for visiting and sympathizing with them.

He told the prime minister that his son was inducted into the service 22 months ago and added that he felt proud of his son for opting to lay his life with dignity while fighting for the country.

## Pakistan rejects US human...

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concerning that a report purported to highlight human rights situations around the world ignored or downplayed the most urgent hotspots of gross human rights violations such as in Gaza and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

"Only a politically motivated report can ignore the alarming situation in Gaza, the weaponization of humanitarian assistance and the massacre of over 33,000 civilians. Silence of the United States on the continuing genocide in Gaza runs counter to the stated objectives behind the so-called country reports on human rights," she remarked.

The spokesperson reiterated that Pakistan remained steadfast in its commitment to strengthen its own human rights framework, constructively engage to promote international human rights agenda and uphold fairness and objectivity in the international human rights discourse.

"If the US must engage in this exercise, then we expect the US State Department to at least exercise due diligence when conducting the assessment of complex issues, demonstrate objectivity, impartiality, and responsibility in finalizing such reports."

## ICC T20 World Cup 2024 trophy unveiled in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ICC T20 World Cup 2024 Trophy was unveiled here at the Shakarparian National Park on Thursday with a sense of excitement and anticipation.

As it got unveiled, it was greeted by enthusiastic fans, eager to catch a glimpse of the coveted trophy.

The trophy's three-day tour of Pakistan is a symbol of hope and unity, bringing together cricket enthusiasts from all walks of life.

From Islamabad the trophy would travel to Abbottabad thus giving a chance to the city's fans to gather around and marvel at its sleek shimmering silver design.

In Pakistan, the trophy's presence would be a reminder that with hard work and dedication, the dreams of lifting the coveted prize could become a reality.

The stage was set for the main event (ICC T20 World Cup 2024) to be held in the USA and West Indies from June 2 to 29, where world's top teams would compete for the ultimate prize. The trophy was also pictured outside the Parliament house and Faisal Mosque.

ISLAMABAD: People gathered around the ICC men's T20 World Cup trophy displayed at Pakistan Monument in Federal Capital, during a trophy tour at Pakistan, the 2024 tournament will be hosted by the West Indies and the USA jointly from June 1 to June 29, 2024.

## SCHOOL OF INFANTRY & TACTICS, QUETTA CANTONMENT

Following quotations are invited upto 10 May 2024 at 1000 hours out of Special Annual Training Grant FY 2023/24. The firm will be liable to pay all taxes i.e GST, IT and BST:-

- Repair/Maint of Short Rg 1,2,3,4 & 5.
- Purchase of Fur & misc items for YO's Tac-3 (New Building).
- Renovation/ uplift of Halls (Eftikhar Auditorium, Ayub Hall, Akhtar Malik Hall and Shabir Sharif Hall).
- Repair/maint of Abid Majeed Sports Complex (AMSC).
- Contact: 0333-0532545. P.L.D No.35260

## SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited from reputable firms / authorized dealers for Up-gradation of Training Facilities/ Sports/ Accommodation of Foreign Trainees at Command and Staff College Quetta. Detail is as under:-

Ser	Description	Qty	A/U
1	Renovation works at OFCs Street Front (Incl fountains, Landscaping & Tiling)	6000	Sqft
2	Renovation of OFCs Parking Swings	12	Nos.
3	Landscaping, Weather shield, Duster and Uplift of OFCs Park	6800	Sqft
4	Uplift of OFCs Cell Clerks Offices	1	Job

Quotations are required to reach this office till 0900 hours on 10 May 2024. This tender will be opened at 1000 hours on same day. The price should be inclusive of income tax, sales tax and any other taxes and should be valid for FY 2023/24. For more information visit (www.cscquetta.gov.pk). The authority of accepting / rejecting the bids lies with the issuing authority.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS**  
Note:- The firm must be GST & NTN registered. Incase of exemption, proof should accompany the quotation. R.I. No. 121748

Lieutenant Colonel  
General Staff Officer Projects, (Grade-I)  
Command and Staff College Quetta  
Telephone: 081-9201194



QUETTA: DGNAB (Balochistan) listening complainants during open kutchery at NAB's Complaint Office in DC office

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Ser	Description	Qty	A/U	Remarks
1	Uplift of Htkhar Stadium			
a.	Supply and fixing of Artificial Grass	11000	Sqft	
b.	Supply and fixing of Practice Net for Cricket	2	Nos.	
c.	Supply and fixing of Pads for Golf Practice	8	Nos.	
d.	Supply and fixing of Iron Gate (12' x 8')	1	No.	
2	Uplift of Saeed Conference Room			
a.	Acrylic paint on Ceiling	200	Sqft	
b.	Fabric Paneling on Walls	1152	Sqft	
3	Uplift of Ibrar Hall			
a.	Cushioning of Seats	300	Nos.	
b.	Carpeting	9600	Sqft	

Quotations are required to reach this office till 0900 hours on 10 May 2024. This tender will be opened at 1000 hours on same day. The price should be inclusive of income tax, sales tax and any other taxes and should be valid for FY 2023/24. For more information visit (www.cscquetta.gov.pk). The authority of accepting / rejecting the bids lies with the issuing authority.

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Lieutenant Colonel  
General Staff Officer Projects, (Grade-I)  
Command and Staff College Quetta  
Telephone: 081-9201194



## PM for political commitment, adequate investment to achieve goal of malaria-free world

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the world observes World Malaria Day on Thursday, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif called for a vigorous political commitment and adequate investment strategies to reach the goal of a world free from the disease.

The prime minister, in a message on the Day, stressed the need to learn from each others' experiences and support each others' efforts in combating the disease.

He said the theme for World Malaria Day 2024 was "Advancing health equity, gender equality and human rights" which was an undertaking to involve multiple stakeholders i.e. policy makers, donors, healthcare providers, and community members from all walks of life in the fight against malaria.

He said the research and academic institutions needed to flag scientific advances to both experts and

the general public, international partners, companies and foundations to showcase their efforts and reflect on how to further scale up malaria control interventions.

"The aim of Government of Pakistan, in this regard, is to get more people involved in the fight against the disease that affects more than 1 million Pakistanis every year," he remarked. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that despite the country's achievements in malaria control, sustaining the gains remains a challenge.

"It is my belief that every individual has the right to live a healthy and prosperous life with dignity. Everyone must have access to quality-assured malaria testing and treatment facilities, free of cost, at their doorsteps," he added.

The prime minister said that the Ministry of National Health Services

and Coordination through Common Management Unit Malaria, National and international partners, provincial counterparts, NGOs and private stakeholders had significantly enhanced the free malaria testing and treatment facilities in the malaria endemic districts across the country.

He said that as the government strived to provide equitable health services to the citizens, the role of the private sector and the global partners was appreciable.

He called upon all partners, organizations, healthcare professionals, and individuals to unite in their efforts to end malaria.

"We must work collaboratively to strengthen healthcare systems, increase access to quality diagnosis and treatment, and raise awareness about the importance of prevention and controlling measures of malaria," the prime minister added.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq planting a sapling of Magnolia Grandiflora in front of Parliament House.

## SMC officers from NIM receive briefing on BISP operations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 35th Senior Management Course (SMC) Officers from the National Institute of Management (NIM) Islamabad, Thursday visited Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Headquarters and have knowledge of BISP's operations and expertise in executing its various pro-poor schemes for disadvantaged sections of society.

The visit of the SMC Officers was conducted under the guidance of Directing Staff, Ms. Samreen Zahra with an aim to delve into BISP's operations and expertise in implementing Social Protection Programmes aimed at uplifting marginalized segments of society.

Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, provided them with an insightful briefing and elaborated upon the foundational principles of BISP, its extensive nationwide presence, and its overarching mission of empowering disadvantaged communities.

During the session, Secretary Ahmad shed light on BISP's core initiatives, including flagship programs such as Benazir Kafalaat, Benazir Taleemi Wazaif, and Benazir Nashonuma.

He apprised the participants about the registration process for beneficiaries and underscored BISP's pivotal role in responding to shocks and crises within the community.

Furthermore, the Sec-

retary BISP highlighted several recent innovations and enhancements introduced by the programme, including the implementation of a new payment model, the deployment of Mobile Registration Vehicles (MRVs), and the initiation of Digital and Financial Literacy Programs.

He also outlined BISP's commitment to inclusivity through initiatives such as the Hybrid Social Protection Scheme and the enrollment of widows in BISP. An interactive question-answer session was also conducted, wherein the participants actively queried about BISP's budgetary allocations and its partnerships with International Donors.

## Mustafa directs chief whip to ensure presence of their respective members in house

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, issued directives on Thursday instructing the chief whip to ensure the presence of their respective members in the house.

He said that it had been decided to start the proceedings of the house at the announced time, underscoring the responsibility of the chief whip of all political parties to guarantee the attendance of their party members.

Aijaz Hussain Jakhani and Noor Alam Khan also voiced concerns regarding the absence of ministers and officials of the ministers in the house.

They urged the chair to issue directives to ensure the presence of ministers. Shazia Marri of the Pakistan People's Party raised concerns about the import of wheat despite Pakistan having bumper crops.

She called for an investigation into the matter. Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah requested a briefing on the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

The Deputy Speaker also asked the members to approach the office of the Federal Minister for Industries & Production, Rana Tanveer to attend meeting on the issue of wheat price.



ISLAMABAD: PM's Coordinator on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam holds meeting with Asian Development Bank Mission led by Climate Change Specialist Nathan A. Rive at her office.

## Court stops PTI founder, Bushra to give statements against state institutions

ISLAMABAD (Online): Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad has stopped PTI Founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to give statement or talk against state institutions and their officials by way of gesturing.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana of AC has issued big order on the petition of PTI founder in connection with fair trial.

It has been said in the order that media should avoid publishing political and provocative narratives which target state institutions and their officials.

There is allegation PTI founder gave political, provocative and biased statements against the revered person of state institutions. Giving statements with reference to judiciary, Pakistan army or army chief are tantamount to disrupt the judicial decorum. Such statements act as impediment in the process of administration of justice. Taking care of requirements of court decorum and fair trial

is responsibility of court. Jail authorities should restore jail court at its prior to Eid position.

The accused persons will not give political, provocative and biased statements with reference to state institutions and their officials through gesturing as well.

It was further said in the order media will keep its reporting restricted to court's proceedings. Prosecution, accused persons and their lawyers will not give provocative, political and biased statements during the hearing of the case which hurts court decorum. Family members and others lawyers and advisors who are present in the court will not make such statements. This order is conditional to PEMRA guidelines. Under which it is prohibited to talk about the pending hearing cases.

According to PEMRA code of conduct the political statement of accused does not fall in legal reporting.



ISLAMABAD: Central Secretary Information Isteqam e Pakistan Party calls on Palestinian Ambassador Ahmed Rabi at Palestine Embassy in the Federal Capital.

## IHC suspends notification on fixation of prices of rotli, nan in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) while suspending the notification of price of nan and rotli in Islamabad has sought detailed reply from the respondents. The court adjourned the hearing of the case till May 6. Petition filed by resident Nanie Welfare Association came up for hearing before Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri of IHC Thursday.

Umar Ijaz Gillani counsel for the petitioner and representative of district administration appeared in the court.

The representative of district administration told the court powers have been given to the DCOs for determining the price by making amendment in the law.

Barrister Umar Ijaz Gillani counsel for Nanie Welfare Association argued that it is here expensive and the fare too is higher. Controller general has no powers under section 3. Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri remarked have Tandoorwalas been asked that is being purchased by them at what rate or the order has been issued only to please the people.

## SC rejects contract employees plea for regularization service

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has dismissed the petition of contract employees of Fisheries Live Stock seeking regularization of their service.

Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail has remarked the employees were employed for a specific project. Their jobs have been abolished due to abolition of project.

He gave these remarks during the course of hear-

ing the petition Thursday. The case regarding regularization of contract employees in Fisheries Live stock came up for hearing before SC Thursday.

The counsel said Sindh government had passed the law for regularization of contract employees.

Additional Advocate General (AAG) said the law under which they are demanding regularization has been declared null and void.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad and Directing Staff of NIM, Ms. Samreen Zahra, join the officers of 35th Senior Management Course (SMC) for a group photograph during their visit to BISP Headquarters.

## NACTA organizes 1st Annual Research Conference

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Counter Terrorism Agency (NACTA) in collaboration with UNODC organized a crucial Research Conference on 'Understanding Terrorism in Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the National Coordinator NACTA, Muhammad Tahir Rai, Hilal-i-Shujaat and Sitara-Imtiaz observed that the discussions and insights garnered during the conference will go on to serve as a rich repository of actionable strategies.

The insights offered will be translated into practical policies, procedures,

and interventions that align with NACTA's mission and mandate to counter and prevent extremism & terrorism in Pakistan.

The conference brought together six distinguished subject experts from all over Pakistan and beyond to present their respective findings on this very pressing issue. The specific focus on NMDs helped address the critical gaps in the existing academic literature.

The Conference was attended by participants from all relevant stakeholders, including Universities, Research Institutes, Think Tanks, and Government organizations.

## IG Islamabad says: Police to be equipped with modern technology

ISLAMABAD (Online): Inspector General Islamabad Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi has said Police will be equipped with the modern technology.

During a visit to Safe City project in Islamabad, he said Police will digitalize its processes.

Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi said that Safe City Islamabad will be made the best model of Pakistan. He said no area in Islamabad should be hidden from the eye of the camera.

The Inspector General Police said advanced drones will be added to Safe City project.

## Wafaqi Mohtasib team directs ETO to provide 1-window facility, awareness campaign

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: An Inspection Team from the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Office on Thursday visited the Excise and Taxation Office, Islamabad under the directions of the Federal Ombudsman, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, with a view to ascertaining the difficulties being faced by the general public with regard to registration of vehicles.

Headed by a senior advisor, the inspection

team met with the people there and listened to their complaints for prompt redressal. The inspection team had submitted its report to the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman), who directed that a one window facility desk might be established therein to provide all facilities to the public under one roof. The team was informed by the ETO Office that facilities relating to registration of the vehicles, transfer of registration and payment of token tax etc were currently available Online. Moreover, the ETO Office is also providing such facilities at the residence of the applicants by payment of a nominal fee



of Rs. 1900. It further informed that the mobile teams from the ETO Office are also providing the registration facilities to the general public at the public parks and other public places daily after 4 pm.

## Tennis Club demolished by CDA amid anti-encroachment action at public park: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar said that the matter was taken up to the Minister for Interior, whereas the report would be issued on the matter that would further reveal the facts.

"If you write to the Interior Minister, the matter will be resolved. There is no double standard against any province. It is not permissible to think like that. We are here for further support," he responded to Senator Taj Haider in response to his allegations of discrimination to Sindh province.

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## DG Libraries inaugurates third day of book fair

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Director General of the Department of Libraries, Muhammad Arshad on Thursday inaugurated the third day of a three-day book fair organized by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration.

The day three began with Muhammad Arshad's insightful introductory remarks, followed by Sardar Irshad Shaheen's thought-provoking review of his book entitled "Physics and Sufi Cosmology: Creation of Universe and Life in the Light of Science and Philosophical Spirituality."

Shaheen's exploration of the connection between physics and Sufi cosmology sparked curiosity and bridged the gap between science and spirituality. Attendees left the session enriched and inspired.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan in a meeting with Mir Tariq Bugtli.

## Nutrition Int'l donates high-tech food lab to IFA for enhanced quality control

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Nutrition International has gifted a CDR Food Lab machine to the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), promising faster and more accurate food inspections in the Federal Capital.

Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Tahira Saddique said that this high-tech equipment would allow the authority to check the quality of

cooking oil and milk more effectively, ensuring safer food for the city's residents.

She said that with the help of this machine IFA would overcome the big issue of rancid oil in the city and the department would be able to test oil on the spot through this mobile machine. Nutrition International, a global organization focused on improving nutrition, made the donation during a ceremony in Islamabad.

## Private education sector demands allocation of funds for educational institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Malik Abrar Hussain, the central president of All Pakistan Private Schools and Colleges Association, had demanded the government of Pakistan to allocate handsome funds in the upcoming budget for private educational institutions to continue education for the children of this country.

Provision of facilities is the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan, he expressed these views in his statement released to the media on the occasion of meeting with senior leader

Malik Deen Muhammad Awan.

On this occasion, Malik Abrar Hussain said that private educational institutions are carrying the educational burden of the government and fulfilling the responsibilities for imparting education to the people with utmost care.

Under Article 25-A of the Constitution, it is the responsibility of the state to provide the children with good education.

There is a need to support educational institutions which are providing education at a low cost.

## PIDE talk: Gutierrez urges bold fiscal reform

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) hosted a public lecture on "Sustainable Fiscal Reforms: International Experience and Applications for Pakistan," featuring Arturo Herrera Gutierrez, Global Director for Governance at the World Bank, as the keynote speaker.

At the core of his presentation, Arturo Herrera Gutierrez emphasized the urgent need for sustainable fiscal reforms in Pakistan. Drawing from international experiences, he highlighted the criticality of establishing a stable and sustainable debt path as a cornerstone for Pakistan's economic future. "Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture where it can either pave the path for sustained economic growth or fall into the recurring traps of debt distress," remarked

Gutierrez. In parallel, he discussed the historical context of economic challenges faced by countries like Mexico during the

fiscal sustainability requires a comprehensive long-term strategy, not just balancing budgets annually. These measures are critical



1980s and how these experiences shape fiscal strategies today. Moreover, Gutierrez outlined the necessity of strong macroeconomic frameworks, robust debt management practices, and the establishment of institutional arrangements to ensure discipline in fiscal policy. He emphasized that ensuring

for building credibility and securing access to financial markets. The World Bank emphasized the need to maintain consistency over time to avoid the economic problems of the past.

He brought to the attention the concerning surge of debt distress globally, particularly post-COVID-19, necessitating a

re-evaluation of fiscal sustainability approaches. His presentation mentioned countries with gross public debt issues, notably, countries like the US, Canada, Japan, and Pakistan, which have debt-to-GDP ratios exceeding 75%. Japan, with a debt ratio of 252% of GDP and a low interest rate of 0.88%, contrasts sharply with Greece, which faces a higher interest rate of 3.55% despite a lower debt ratio of 168%. This indicates that the debt-to-GDP ratio is significant, but the sustainability of fiscal finances also sends a critical signal to the market, impacting interest rates.

During the lecture, Gutierrez imparted critical insights on sustainable fiscal policies across the globe, focusing specifically on how these strategies can be adapted to Pakistan's economic context.



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## Digital growth

Technology divides us. According to a new UNDP report on Pakistan, titled Doing Digital for Development — Access, Adopt, Anticipate, Accelerate, noticeable differences in human development can be seen between those districts that have embraced digital transformation compared to those that have lagged behind.

The report, which underscores the importance of equitable and safe access to technology as an important means of improving human lives, places Pakistan in the category of countries where digital development can thus far be described as 'moderate' at best. Over half the country still has no access to the internet, and its women remain grossly underserved. Of the women who do have access to digital technologies, 83.5pc say their phone ownership is policed by their spouses or parents. Meanwhile, digital development among the richest 20pc of its population is 15 times greater than in its poorest quintile. Clearly, digital access has become a marker of privilege in Pakistan.

This needs to be urgently addressed. Pakistan is already among the lowest-ranked countries in the UNDP's Human Development and Gender Inequality indices. It would appear that sound digital development policies alone can greatly strengthen its present dismal standing in these areas. It is encouraging, in this context, to note that Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has described access to digital resources and modern technologies as a fundamental human necessity, just like electricity, healthcare or education.

One hopes that this belief is more commonplace at the policy level than it presently seems to be. Democratizing digital development will catalyse a rapid, if not immediate, improvement in human development indicators for the underserved segments of the Pakistani citizenry. All that is needed is some creative rethinking about how they can be better integrated into the overall digital development scheme, especially in terms of ease of internet access. The government may, for example, consider an internet subsidy for underdeveloped districts.

With policy debates on what Pakistan needs to re-emerge from its economic slump repeatedly hitting the resource-constraint wall, perhaps it is time our policymakers started giving more weightage to the role accelerated digital development can play in turning things around quickly and sustainably.

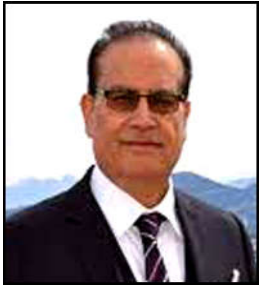
Apart from erasing distortions in intra-district human development, increased adoption of modern technologies will also help improve national productivity. Consider that next door in India, even roadside hawkers have adopted digital payment systems simply because they ease commerce for both buyers and sellers in myriad different ways.

There is no reason why the ordinary people of Pakistan will not embrace similar digital-driven improvements in their everyday lives, especially if they are also backed enthusiastically by the government under a comprehensive digital development policy. The existing infrastructure may need improvements over time, but for now, a concerted push in the right direction is a good place to start.

# Wakhan Corridor: Vital for CPEC and BRI

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



An important development that went unnoticed by the Pakistan media radar was the construction of a 50-kilometer stretch of the Silk Road, extending from the Wakhan district of Afghanistan to the Chinese border. This road was inaugurated by Afghanistan's Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in September last year (2023). With the construction of this road, Afghanistan has established a direct link with China, reducing the distance and lowering the cost for the import and export of commercial goods between the two countries. Meanwhile, the Afghan and Chinese governments are feverishly discussing the commencement of traffic through the Wakhan Corridor, a narrow strip of territory in northeastern Afghanistan stretching 350 kilometers to China and separating Tajikistan from Pakistan. It is located at the confluence of three mountain ranges — the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and the Pamir,

forming the Pamir knot.

The construction of the road and the serious discussions between the two governments are highly significant and have the potential to impact Pakistan both positively and negatively. Positively, it could extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) from Pakistan to Tajikistan through Afghanistan, and link the landlocked Central Asian states with the Karachi and Gwadar ports. Negatively, it could reduce Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan for transit trade.

With the opening of the Wakhan Corridor, a highway linkage between Tajikistan and Pakistan through Azad Kashmir could be established, creating a significant opportunity for enhanced trade and economic activity in the region. This route could facilitate the trade of various goods such as minerals, textiles, agricultural products, and manufactured goods. Central Asian states could export natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals, while importing goods like textiles, machinery, and electronics. Though, the trade volume would depend on several factors such as infrastructure capacity, ease of trade regulations, and market demand. However, with the potential opening of new trade routes and access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea through Karachi and Gwadar Port, trade volumes

could be substantial.

If CPEC were extended through Afghanistan to Central Asia, the benefits for Pakistan could be significant. It could further enhance Pakistan's strategic position as a trade hub, increase connectivity with Central Asian markets, and boost economic growth. In dollar terms, the benefits could include increased revenue from transit fees, expanded trade opportunities, and improved economic ties with regional countries. This would strengthen Pakistan's geopolitical position and the development of infrastructure along this route would stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities, and foster cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections, contributing to greater understanding and cooperation in the region.

Additionally, the corridor would provide Central Asian states with a shorter and more efficient route to access international markets via Gwadar Port, which is strategically important due to its location at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz. It would enhance its strategic importance by providing an alternative route for trade that bypasses traditional chokepoints and improves connectivity between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, facilitating greater economic cooperation and integration in the region.

For Afghanistan, the direct access to China through the Wakhan border would enable Afghanistan to carry out its entire trade of over \$1.3 billion with China through this route. As a result, Pakistan could potentially experience a reduction in its geopolitical advantage and security leverage over Afghanistan. Alternatively, Afghanistan would reduce its dependence on Pakistan and vulnerability to disruptions in transit trade, thus weakening Pakistan's ability to use security concerns. Afghanistan would potentially seek closer ties with other regional powers, diminishing Pakistan's geopolitical leverage in the region.

For China, the opening of the Wakhan border would give a much-needed boost to extending Chinese reach to diverse markets as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. However, security and cross-border terrorism will continue to be Beijing's primary focus. Therefore, the opening of the road will largely depend on the ability of the Taliban to maintain control over Afghan territory, prevent the emergence of any real threat to China's domestic security by groups and militants inside Afghanistan, and Chinese willingness to set up a border control regime and construct necessary infrastructure such as roads, highways, and bridges to link Afghanistan with China through the Wakhan Corridor.

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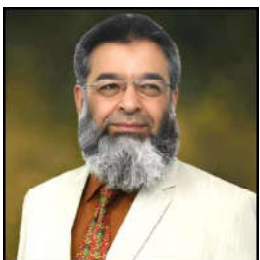
After the opening of this trade route, all traffic originating from Afghanistan for China, either via sea or through the Karakoram Highway, will be diverted toward the Wakhan border. This route will assume high significance as China is increasingly tapping many areas of Afghanistan for mining precious and rare minerals. China has signed impressive deals, including a \$10 billion deal for access to lithium deposits in Afghanistan and a \$3 billion deal to develop Afghanistan's largest copper deposit near Kabul. In Badakhshan, China is exploring minerals such as gold, lapis lazuli, and various gemstones. Additionally, China is exploring copper reserves in Balkh, a rare mineral in Helmand, and iron ores in Herat, as well as iron, copper, and precious stones in Kandahar.

The current route for transporting millions and millions tonnes of minerals every day extracted from Afghanistan and transported to China involves using the Karakoram Highway, which is far more costly compared to transportation directly from Afghanistan to China through the Wakhan Border. The distance between Badakhshan Province and Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, via the Wakhan Border is approximately 600-800 kilometers, whereas

the distance from Badakhshan's capital, Faizabad, to Urumqi via KKH is approximately 1500 km. This means that all minerals being transported through the Karakoram Highway will be diverted to the Wakhan Border, depriving the KKH of a significant amount of traffic and depriving the government of Pakistan of transit fees, levies, customs duties, and Pakistani trucks of business, negatively impacting all businesses along the entire route.

The development of the Wakhan Corridor has transitioned from a mere discussion to a tangible possibility. This vital route is set to open soon, presenting Pakistan with numerous strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is imperative for the government of Pakistan to proactively position itself to assess the current scenario and future prospects. A comprehensive vision, mission, strategies, and plan should be developed to fully exploit the potential of the Wakhan Corridor and leverage the strategic significance of the region, which is at the center of imperial ambitions and geopolitical complexities. Failure to do so may result in Pakistan missing out on significant economic and strategic opportunities while facing potential challenges from shifting geopolitical dynamics in the region.

## Impact of disinformation and deepfakes on journalism



By Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

The term "disinformation" has gained significant traction in the modern world, but the act of disseminating false or misleading information for the purpose of deceiving or manipulating is far from a new phenomenon. Throughout history, diverse forms of misinformation, propaganda, and deceptive communication have been prevalent, shaping narratives and influencing public opinion across different cultures and periods.

In ancient Athenian Democracy, during the 5th Century BC, political orators like Alcibiades and Themistocles were known for using persuasive techniques that sometimes included exaggerations or selective presentation of facts to sway public opinion in their favor. Similarly, during the medieval period, monarchs, religious institutions, and rulers utilized manuscripts, artworks, and proclamations to control narratives and shape perceptions. Feudal societies witnessed lords and monarchs employing narratives and loyalty oaths to reinforce hierarchical structures

and cultivate loyalty among vassals. The Renaissance and Enlightenment periods saw the use of pamphlets, newspapers, and books to disseminate ideas challenging established norms. However, it was during World War I and II that disinformation and propaganda emerged as lethal tools, blatantly used by various nations to shape public perception, boost morale, and vilify the enemy. The ideological conflict of the Cold War further intensified these efforts, with both the United States and the Soviet Union engaging in extensive propaganda campaigns to influence global opinion.

With the emergence of television and global media, disinformation campaigns evolved into more sophisticated endeavors. Governments and non-state entities began using misinformation to pursue political objectives, contributing to the surge in dissemination of conspiracy theories. During this era, Muslims and Islam faced heightened prejudice and discrimination fueled by unfounded propaganda and disinformation.

Fast forward to the digital age, the advent of the internet and social media has introduced fresh avenues for the swift transmission of information, encompassing both accurate and erroneous content. In contemporary democracies, there is growing apprehension about disinformation campaigns, fake news, and online manipulation. Instances have been noted where countries

engage in false flag operations to tarnish the reputation of neighboring nations.

In this digital age, where information and media play pivotal roles in shaping public opinion, the emergence of deepfake technology introduces a disconcerting dimension to the landscape of election campaigns. Deepfakes refer to the sophisticated use of artificial intelligence to create realistic video or audio content, often featuring individuals saying or doing things they never actually did.

One of the primary concerns is the ease with which deepfakes can be disseminated through social media platforms, where information spreads rapidly and is often consumed without thorough scrutiny. A manipulated video of a candidate could go viral, shaping public perception and influencing voter sentiments. The impact extends beyond its immediate release, as media outlets scramble to verify authenticity, leading to heightened atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust.

Furthermore, the potential for deepfakes to target key moments in an election campaign adds complexity, overshadowing policy discussions and shifting focus to sensationalism. In the wake of these concerns, countering deepfake threats in election campaigns emerges as a critical imperative.

Policymakers, technology companies, and electoral bodies must collaborate to develop robust mechanisms for detecting and preventing the spread of deepfakes. Educating

the public about their existence and potential impact becomes a cornerstone of resilience against this new form of misinformation.

Safeguarding the integrity of democratic processes demands a proactive approach that addresses the evolving challenges posed by artificial intelligence-driven manipulation. As election campaigns unfold in an era of deepfake technology, the need for vigilance and collective action is clear. It's imperative to uphold the principles of truth and transparency to preserve the integrity of democratic institutions.

In an era where information spreads at the click of a button, the veracity of news has become increasingly precarious. The rise of disinformation and deepfakes has unleashed a torrent of challenges for journalism, threatening the very foundations of truth and credibility.

Disinformation, the deliberate spread of false or misleading information, has become a weapon of choice for various actors seeking to manipulate public opinion. With the proliferation of social media platforms, misinformation can reach millions within seconds, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Journalists, once revered as gatekeepers of truth, now find themselves wading through a quagmire of falsehoods, struggling to separate reality from propaganda.

Deepfakes, a more insidious offspring of disinformation, pose an even

graver threat. These sophisticated AI-generated videos manipulate audio and visual content to create hyper-realistic simulations of individuals saying or doing things they never did. From politicians to celebrities, no one is immune to the potential damage wrought by deepfakes. They can be used to fabricate speeches, incite violence, or even sway elections, sowing discord and eroding trust in institutions.

The impact of disinformation and deepfakes on journalism is multifaceted and profound. Firstly, they undermine the credibility of news sources, fostering a climate of skepticism and distrust. In an environment where misinformation thrives, audiences become increasingly cynical, questioning the legitimacy of even well-researched reporting. This erosion of trust not only undermines the integrity of journalism but also poses a threat to democracy itself, as an informed electorate is essential for a functioning society.

Moreover, the proliferation of disinformation and deepfakes complicates the already daunting task of fact-checking. Journalists are forced to navigate a labyrinth of deceit, verifying sources and cross-referencing information in a race against time. Yet, even the most diligent efforts can falter in the face of sophisticated disinformation campaigns designed to deceive and mislead.

Furthermore, the prevalence of disinformation

and deepfakes has profound implications for the future of journalism itself. As trust in traditional media continues to erode, journalists are forced to grapple with existential questions about their role in society. How can they uphold the principles of truth and accuracy in an age of rampant deception? How can they regain the trust of a skeptical public inundated with misinformation? These are daunting challenges that demand innovative solutions and a reimagining of the journalistic landscape.

In response to these challenges, news organizations must prioritize transparency and accountability. By openly acknowledging the prevalence of disinformation and deepfakes, journalists can begin to rebuild trust with their audiences. Moreover, collaboration between journalists, technologists, and policymakers is essential to developing strategies for combating the spread of misinformation and safeguarding the integrity of the news.

Ultimately, the impact of disinformation and deepfakes on journalism is far-reaching and profound. As society grapples with the implications of an increasingly digital and interconnected world, the need for reliable and trustworthy journalism has never been greater. Only by confronting these challenges head-on can journalists hope to fulfill their essential role as guardians of truth in a world besieged by falsehoods.

## Understanding and overcoming the challenges of lack of civic awareness



By Yasir

Lack of civic awareness is a pressing concern in many societies worldwide, characterized by insufficient knowledge and understanding of one's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities as a citizen. This phenomenon can stem from various sources such as inadequate education, biased media coverage, and socioeconomic disparities. Its effects are far-reaching, manifesting in weakened democracies, decreased public engagement, and unequal representation. To address this issue, it is vital to implement comprehensive civic education programs, promote accessible information, and en-

courage community participation. By doing so, we can empower citizens to actively shape their communities and foster a more inclusive and vibrant society.

Civic awareness is crucial in maintaining a healthy democracy and promoting social cohesion. When individuals are well-informed about their rights and obligations, they are more likely to participate in the political process, engage in civil discourse, and contribute positively to their communities. Conversely, those who lack civic awareness often exhibit apathy toward politics and public affairs, leading to lower voter turnout, reduced public engagement, and weakened democratic institutions.

Several factors contribute to the prevalence of low civic awareness in contemporary societies. Insufficient emphasis on civics and social studies in school curricula can result in students graduating without a strong foundation in democratic principles and practices. Media Sensationalism and bi-

ases in mainstream media outlets can distort public perception of political events and issues, further alienating citizens from the democratic process. The rise of social media has led to echo chambers and filter bubbles, where users are exposed primarily to information that reinforces their existing beliefs, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. Economic Disparity or inequality can exacerbate feelings of disconnection and marginalization, reducing civic engagement and trust in political institutions. Political polarization and increasing ideological divides between political parties and factions can create a sense of alienation among moderates and independent participants, discouraging them from engaging in civic activities.

Low civic awareness has far-reaching consequences for both individual and collective well-being. A population lacking civic awareness is less likely to participate in political processes, contact elected officials, or join advocacy groups, resulting in weaker

democratic processes and increased vulnerability to authoritarian tendencies. Citizens who are uninformed about public affairs are less likely to participate in community organizations, volunteer efforts, and other initiatives that strengthen social bonds and improve quality of life. Voters with limited civic awareness may struggle to make informed decisions at the ballot box, potentially leading to underrepresented voices and policies that do not accurately reflect the needs and desires of the broader populace. As civically aware individuals become increasingly frustrated with the perceived failures of political systems and public services, trust in institutions erodes, further undermining social stability and cooperation. Addressing the challenge of low civic awareness requires concerted effort from multiple stakeholders, including governments, educational institutions, and the private sector.

It is necessary to spread civic awareness. Strengthening civic educa-

tion and reforming curricula to emphasize the study of civics, history, and political science can help equip young people with the knowledge necessary to navigate complex political landscapes and understand their roles as citizens. Promoting accessible information governments and non-profit organizations should work together to provide accurate, objective, and easily accessible information about public affairs, enabling citizens to stay informed and engaged. Encouraging community participation local government bodies, schools, and community organizations can organize events and programs encouraging citizen involvement in decision-making processes and fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility. Digital platforms can be harnessed to facilitate constructive dialogue, debate, and collaboration among citizens, helping to break down barriers and bridge divides across cultural, economic, and ideological lines. Supporting grassroots move-

ments empowering grassroots organizations and activists can amplify citizen voices, drive policy change, and inspire others to act in their communities.

Lack of civic awareness presents a significant challenge to modern societies, as it hinders the ability of individuals to effectively participate in the democratic process and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach involving education reform, promotion of accessible information, and encouragement of community involvement. By nurturing civic awareness, societies can foster a more informed, engaged, and responsible citizenry, paving the way for healthier democracies, stronger social bonds, and a brighter future for all.

The writer is an academic researcher and youth leader with more than three years of acting volunteering experience. He is currently working as a freelance writer.



## Women are very hard working and are asset to society: Maryam

CM addresses passing-out ceremony of lady constables

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated women on Thursday as they work like superhumans as mothers, daughters, sisters and professionals.

Addressing the passing-out ceremony of lady constables at Police Training College Chung, she said, "Women are very hard working and they are an asset to society." Maryam said, "The passing out lady constables are very active and alert. I am happy to see that Pakistan has been blessed with so much talent. No one can imagine how hard women work; I salute all for their dedication and commitment to work."

said, "I am happy that this time the police gave sword of honor to a young woman. My sisters, daughters! I am proud of you all." She added, "The training of lady police constables has been conducted in line with the International best practices and modern requirements. It was a pleasure, indeed, to see the professionalism of lady police constables undergoing training." She said, "If you need any kind of help for training at college, let me know. I am always there to facilitate you."

Maryam Nawaz said, "I have directed the IGP Punjab to increase the number of lady police officers, as 7,000 women police officers are not enough." She said, "Time

will come when the number of lady police will surpass 50 per cent."

The chief minister said, "After wearing the police uniform for the first time, I have realised that being a police officer or being sworn in as a CM is a very responsible job." She added, "In the Chief Minister's office, we take decisions, and you get them implemented, you have a heavy responsibility."

She explained, "Women are soft-hearted and quick to forgive, but lady police constables! you have to do justice only. All your sympathies should be with the oppressed; there should be no place in your hearts for the oppressors. The oppressor must be punished."



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif wearing Police uniform inspecting parade of lady constable and Traffic Assistant at Police Training College Chung.

## CM KP chairs meeting on CRBC Left Canal project

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, chaired a meeting on the CRBC Left Canal Project on Thursday and decided to issue the project tender by July of this year.

The meeting was attended by officials from relevant provincial and federal government departments.

During the briefing, the participants were informed that an agreement had been reached between the federal and provincial governments on previously finalized project implementation details. Briefings were provided by relevant authorities on various aspects of the project during the meeting.

It was informed that Rs. 20 billion would be allocated for the project in the upcoming fiscal year's development program, with the federal government also pledging Rs. 10 billion in the upcoming fiscal year's PSDP for the project.

According to the briefing, funds for the project will be shared from the federal government and 35% from the provincial government. Approximately 286,000 acres of barren land will be irrigated through the Left Canal Project. The meeting also decided to initiate another project to irrigate an additional 90,000 acres of land in southern districts. The Chief Minister instructed

relevant authorities to commence work on this project.

He further instructed them to ensure the completion of all necessary arrangements for tendering the CRBC Left Canal Project by July of the current year. The Chief Minister emphasized that the CRBC Left Canal Project is indispensable for the food security of the province and highlighted its importance for the country's food security. He stressed the need for early completion without any further delay. The Chief Minister stated that the provincial government would provide funds on a priority basis for projects, considering the economic viability of the project.

## PHC seeks details of registered cases against KP CM

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court comprising Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Dr Khurshid Iqbal on Wednesday sought details of registered cases against Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Ali Amin Gandapur by anti-corruption watchdog.

The counsel of Ali Amin Gandapur had filed an application in the high court for details of cases.

Additional Director Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) told the court that there were two inquiries against Ali Amin, in the Dera Ismail Khan region. The police representative said that there were six First Investigation Reports (FIRs) in Dera Ismail Khan region while the National Accountability Bureau

(NAB) prosecutor informed about one case against the KP CM.

Counsel for petitioner Arshad Ali told the court that Anti-corruption officials have not yet submitted their response. Justice Shakeel Ahmed wondered how the anti-corruption department could not respond to the government.

The Advocate General replied that an important meeting was scheduled for April 29 in which all the stakeholders including the police chief would be invited to take important decisions related to political cases.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed emphasized coordination and respect between the government and the opposition to address the problems of the masses.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali is being presented Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission Annual performance Report 2023 by the Chairman KPPSC Mr. Sikandar Qayoum at Governor's House.

## WWB directed to identify board's land for revenue generation

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labor, Fazal Shakoor Khan has directed Workers Welfare Board (WWB) to identify commercial land of the board and utilize it for revenue generation.

He issued these directives while chairing meeting of WWB held here on Thursday. He also directed to form a committee comprising three members from WWB

to compile ideas and suggestions regarding land identification and sought a report within two week time. He said that construction of plazas, shops and parks on the commercial land would play a vital role in revenue generation for WWB. On the occasion, the minister was briefed about vocational, technical and general educational institutions working under WWB.



ABBOTTABAD: Workers of Water and Sanitation Services Company Abbottabad (WSSCA) are cleaning and collecting solid waste during cleaning drive campaign at the Main KKH road in Abbottabad.

## Complete digitalization of EPI in progress; efforts on to maintain cold chain: Qasim

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah Thursday said that efforts are underway to completely digitalize Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI) besides maintaining the cold chain to ensure the supply of vaccines in every nook and corner of the province.

These views were expressed by Syed Qasim Shah while speaking as chief guest at a ceremony held here on Thursday to commemorate 50 years of

the EPI programme. During the ceremony, Provincial Health Minister paid special tribute to Prof Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Khan (Late) for being the founding father of paediatrics and pioneer of the Expanded Programme for Immunization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The health minister said he is setting targets for his self and not for others because the goal of developing proper health care cannot be achieved unless taking the task as a challenge.

## Govt. considering increasing TDC for development of growing areas: Advisor

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Finance Advisor, Muzamil Aslam said that the government was considering proposals to increase cess rate with a purpose to develop infrastructure of areas where tobacco was cultivated.

He was chairing a meeting of Tobacco Development Cess (TDC) here Thursday which was also attended by irrigation minister, Aqibullah, Director General Excise, Akmal Khattak and tobacco growers.

The meeting decided to consider proposals of increasing tobacco cess of

Rs 50/Kg on Virginia, Rs 30 per kilogram on Stika and Rs 20 per kilogram on tobacco used in preparing Snuff (Naswar) aiming infrastructure development of growing areas. It was told that TDC is very nominal as compared to tobacco price.

The Finance Advisor told tobacco growers that government is also preparing a strategy to increase revenue by exporting the cash crop. Growers were informed that ten percent or lower cess would be provided in case of any crop loss and funds would be diverted to development projects.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister Food, Bilal Yaseen inaugurating a squad of vehicles for checking stale meat in the office of Punjab Ford Authority in the provincial capital, along with DG Food Authority, Asim Javed and others in the Provincial Capital.

## Order for recounting cannot be given after issuance of forms, 47, 48 and 49: LHC

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) while upholding the success of Rana Bilal Ijaz of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) from National Assembly (NA) constituency NA-81 Gujranwala has declared illegal the Election Commission (EC) notification for recounting.

EC has issued notification for recounting on PML-N candidate Azhar Qayyum application.

It has been maintained in the written order recounting cannot be conducted after issuance of forms 47, 48 and 49. The notification for counting of

votes could be issued during election process. According to written decision EC notification in connection with recounting has no legal standing. The court declares null and void EC notification for recounting. Notification of recounting which was issued on March 18 is illegal.

Justice Shahid Karim further wrote in written order on Chaudhry Bilal Ijaz petition that as per record returning officer dismissed the rival candidate Azhar Qayyum plea for recounting.

The petitioner got success by 117717 votes.

## FC man shot dead in Bannu

PESHAWAR (APP): An official of Frontier Constabulary (FC) was shot dead by unknown motorcyclists in the Janikhel area of Bannu district on Thursday. Police said FC personnel, Abid Ullah was on leave from duty and was on the way home after working in his fields when armed motorcyclists shot him dead.

On receiving information, the police force arrived at the scene and collected evidence for investigation. The Body of the deceased FC personnel was shifted to the hospital for medico-legal procedure.

Police have launched a search operation in the area to arrest the perpetrators involved in the killing.

## Wearing police uniform Court moved for registration of case against Maryam

LAHORE (Online): Petition has been filed seeking registration of case against Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz for wearing police uniform.

The petition has been filed in Sessions court Lahore. Petitioner has filed the petition through Aftab Bajwa advocate.

The petitioner has taken the plea that Maryam Nawaz wore police official uniform while no irrelevant person can wear uniform of state institutions as per law. Application was given to police against Maryam Nawaz but no action was taken. The court should order for registration of case against Maryam Nawaz.

## Minister launches special 'Meat Safety Task Force' in Punjab Food Authority

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin launched a special 'Meat Safety Task Force' in the Punjab Food Authority (PFA), here on Thursday.

The force would consist of meat specialist doctors to ensure detailed inspection of meat, being supplied across province.

While talking to the media, he said meat safety teams would conduct detailed inspections of slaughter houses, frozen meat units, meat shops, and meat processing units on daily basis. The force will also check the meat supplied at the entry points and meat markets of all districts including Lahore. A complete record of traceability of meat coming from poultry farms, slaughterhouses will also be compiled and strict checking of entry points will be ensured in the morning hours.

The Food Minister said that Punjab Food Authority discarded 60 thousand kg of substandard meat during checking of meat shops and entry points in a few days. He said that elements hostile to health will never be allowed to do business and continuous checking is going on to ensure quality milk, meat and food.

"A historic reduction of 800 rupees in the price of a 20 kg bag of flour is ensured and the common man is getting all the fruits of our efforts", he added. He said that steps are being taken to reduce the price of chicken, however, chicken is available in Lahore at Rs 100 less than Peshawar, but the price will be brought down further. Government is planning to ban the export of chicks so that the prices of chicken come down within the country.

## Nine dead, 1,318 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE: Nine persons were killed and 1,318 others injured in 1,276 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 607 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 711 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The analysis showed that 755 drivers, 49 underage drivers, 166 pedestrians and 406 passengers were among the victims of road crashes. The statistics show that 294 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 3,603 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by 101 accidents in Faisalabad with 104 victims, and at third Multan with 78 accidents and 77 victims.



HYDERABAD: Doctors, paramedics and vaccinators hold banners, placards and pamphlets during an awareness walk on World Immunization week and World Malaria Day in the city.

## Minister says: 1000 E-Bikes to be given to students in five cities including Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Transport and Mass Transit Punjab, Bilal Akbar Khan here on Thursday said that in first phase, 1000 motorcycles would be given to students in five cities of Punjab including Rawalpindi.

The Provincial Minister participating in an inauguration ceremony of Chief Minister Youth E-Bike Scheme said that 20,000 bikes would be given to the students in two phases and the female students would also benefit equally from this project.

The event was organized at Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) Rawalpindi. Secretary Transport Punjab, Ahmad Javed Qazi, Member National Assembly, Tahira

Aurangzeb, Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi, Hasan Waqar Cheema and Vice Chancellor, RMU, Dr Muhammad Umar were present on the occasion.

Bilal Akbar Khan said that Chief Minister Punjab wanted to make the students independent in terms of riding. In the first phase, 1000 motorcycles would be given in five cities including Rawalpindi, he added.

Pollution is a big problem in Punjab and this project would help reduce the pollution, the provincial minister said.

Bilal Akbar said that the students of government and private colleges and universities would be able to apply for the scheme but, the students applying for the motorcycles must have driving license.

## Karachi Police arrest 4 suspects in crackdown on street crime

KARACHI (APP): In a relentless effort to curb street crime, the Karachi Police have made significant strides in apprehending suspects involved in criminal activities.

According to the spokesperson of the Karachi Police, over the last 24 hours, the police force engaged in three separate encounters with criminal elements, resulting in the arrest of four suspects, including two injured robbers.

The encounters occurred in various parts of the city, where law enforcement officers confronted armed criminals. During the said encounters, illegal weapons, ammunition, and two motorcycles believed to have been used in various criminal incidents were confiscated from the arrested individuals.



LAHORE: Police and Pakistan Rangers personnel are on alert to deal with any untoward incident outside the Gaddafi Stadium of the provincial government on the occasion of the fourth T20 cricket series match between Pakistan and New Zealand.



## Domestic wheat production grew by 5.4%, 29.69 mln tons output estimated

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) was informed on Thursday that wheat production in the country during the current season (2023-24) grew by 5.4 percent as compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year.

The FCA met here with Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain in chair, which was also attended by the relevant federal and provincial authorities.

While reviewing the performance of the Rabi crops (2023-24), the Committee observed that wheat production for the current season was estimated at 29.69 million tons as the crop was sown over an area of 9.6 million hectares.

The output of other crops, including onions, for the period under review was estimated at 1.92 million tons from an area of 0.122 million hectares.

The increase in production was 3.9%, whereas the area decreased 5.4% over the last year, whereas tomato production during the season was estimated at 627.47 thousand tons from an area of 50.9 thousand hectares.

The production of the above-mentioned commodity increased by 3.9%, whereas the area decreased by 0.3% over the last year.

Meanwhile, potato production for 2023-24 was estimated at 8.1 million tons from an area of 0.3 million hectares. The increase in production was 27.9% over the target assigned by the last FCA.

The FCA held detailed deliberations over the production targets for essential Kharif crops in 2024-25 and decided to fix the production target of cotton at 10.8 million bales, whereas the 8.7 million-ton production target for rice is over 3.1 million hectares of land.

The maize target was fixed at 9.3 million tons of production over 1.5 million hectares of land.

The Committee also fixed the production target of sugarcane for 2024-25 at 76.7 million tons over an area of 1.3 million hectares.

The targets for other crops such as mung, mash, and chilies were also fixed in the meeting of the high-powered committee.

Pondering over the availability of agricultural inputs for Kharif crops (2024), the water availability in canals head will remain 63.61 million acres feet (MAF) as against last year, which was 61.85 MAF. At present, all the provinces are getting satisfactory supplies in the system, it was informed.

The meteorological department informed us that during April to June 2024, normal to slightly above-normal precipitation is expected in most parts of the country, particularly in upper Punjab, during the season May to July 2024.



ISLAMABAD: High-powered Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) mandated to oversee strategic measures for ensuring food security in the country, held its meeting under the Chairmanship of Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research.

## APM Terminals and Pak Commerce Ministry Pave Way for Potential Collaborations

ISLAMABAD (Online): Keith Svendsen, CEO of APM Terminals, accompanied by Jakob Linulf, Danish Ambassador to Pakistan, met with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan to discuss prospective opportunities for APM Terminals in Pakistan. Minister Jam Kamal Khan highlighted Pakistan's interest in land trade and logistics, particularly emphasizing the transportation of goods as a priority investment area. The minister elaborated on Pakistan's multi-modal connectivity, including land-to-sea and sea-to-land routes, and its proximity to key regional ports and economies.

He encouraged investment from Maersk and other Danish organizations in Pakistan's logistics and shipping sectors, stressing the potential for cross-border transit trade with Central Asian countries.

Svendsen conveyed his gratitude to Minister Jam Kamal Khan for Pakistan's steadfast support towards A.P. Molter Maersk, following a meeting with Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. He said I met Honourable Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif today and expressed his gratitude for the unwavering support extended by Pakistan's Government towards A.P. Molter - Maersk.

## WB Director urges 'bold' fiscal reforms for Pakistan's macroeconomic stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Bank's (WB) Global Director for Governance Arturo Herrera Gutierrez on Thursday stressed the need for 'bold' fiscal reforms to address Pakistan's debt distress and achieve macroeconomic stability.

Speaking at a lecture organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Gutierrez highlighted the urgency of sustainable fiscal reforms, drawing from international experiences.

Moreover, he outlined the necessity of strong macroeconomic frameworks, robust debt management practices, and the establishment of institutional arrangements to ensure discipline in fiscal policy.

Gutierrez emphasized that ensuring fiscal sustainability required a comprehensive long-term strategy, not just balancing budgets annually.

re-evaluation of fiscal sustainability approaches. His presentation mentioned countries with gross public debt issues; notably, countries like the US, Canada, Japan and Pakistan, which have debt-to-GDP ratios exceeding 75 percent.

Japan, with a debt ratio of 252 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a low interest rate of 0.88 percent, he said contrasted sharply with Greece, which faced a higher interest rate of 3.55 percent despite a lower debt ratio of 168 percent.

"Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture where it can either pave the path for sustained economic growth or fall into the recurring traps of debt distress," Gutierrez remarked.

He discussed historical economic challenges faced by countries like Mexico in the 1980s and how these experiences shape fiscal

"These measures are critical for building credibility and securing access to financial markets," the WB director said while emphasizing the need to maintain consistency over time to avoid the economic problems of the past.

He brought to the attention the concerning resurgence of debt distress globally, particularly post-COVID-19, necessitating a

"This indicates that the debt-to-GDP ratio is significant, but the sustainability of fiscal finances also sends a critical signal to the market, impacting interest rates."

During the lecture, Gutierrez imparted critical insights on sustainable fiscal policies across the globe.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb in a meeting with Keith Svendsen, CEO of APM Terminals, accompanied by Ambassador, Ambassador Jakob Linulf.

## Action taken against officers not recovering 85% tax: Secretary

SARGODHA (APP): Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control (ET&NC) Punjab Secretary Masood Mukhtar said that action has been taken against the officers who did not meet the target of 85% taxes recovery across the province.

He expressed these views during a surprise visit to the Excise and Taxation office Sargodha Division, here on Thursday. The Secretary said that Excise and Taxation Officers (ETOs) would have to go to the field themselves whereas the recovery of district Khushab and district Bhakkar would be monitored closely.

He said that he had already issued clear instructions to the divisional directors and ETOs of all districts to meet the recovery targets given by the government up to 100% in all

circumstances. "All districts are required to recover 85% of their target in May", he instructed.

He said that the districts whose recovery was not as per the target had been directed to monitor the recovery of ETOs of their respective districts on a daily basis.

The Secretary said that the general holdup was being made effective against the vehicle owners who did not pay tax across the province so that the recovery target could be completed in time.

On the occasion, the Director Sargodha apprised that Rs 859.8 millions had been collected from the four districts and deposited in the national treasury.

He told that more than Rs 492.5 million had been collected from Sargodha district, 166.2 million from Khushab district, 116.4 million from Mianwali district and more than 84.7 million from Bhakkar district.

## Meta delegation calls on Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-member delegation of Meta called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja in her office on Thursday.

The delegation comprised Dania Mukhtar, Head of Public Policy for Pakistan at Meta and Taabeer Ather, Manager Public Policy for Pakistan.

The meeting discussed in details responsible use of social media platforms, said a news release.

The delegation briefed Minister of State for IT about Meta working and different campaigns in Pakistan including Digital Safety Campaign, Election Education Campaign, Anti-Scams Campaign and Digital Literacy Program.

Minister of State for IT and Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja appreciated the working of Meta and ensured her full support to the company.

## Ahad Cheem lauds UNDP's cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Khan Cheema on Thursday appreciated the role of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the provision of critical assistance to Pakistan, especially during floods 2022 and support to the International Partners' Support Group (IPSG).

The minister was talking to United Nations Assistant Secretary General (ASG), Asia, and the Pacific, Ms. Kanni Wignaraja during a meeting here, according to press statement issued by Economic Affairs Division.

Assuring government's commitment, he said government was looking forward to continue cooperation with UNDP for bridging financing gap in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The minister stressed that better visibility of off budget projects and alignment between UNDP projects and national development objectives were essential in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

Ms. Wignaraja thanked the minister for the strong partnership and collaboration on development issues like poverty reduction, climate change, financing instruments.

## Gold rates up by Rs500 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs. 500 and was sold at Rs. 242,500 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs. 242,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 429 to Rs. 207,905 from Rs. 207,476 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs. 190,580 from Rs. 190,186, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja in a meeting with Meta delegation.

## FPCCI welcomes direct flights between Pakistan-Azerbaijan

KARACHI (APP): Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Thursday, welcomed the launch of direct flights between the Pakistan and Azerbaijan anticipating that it will usher into a new era of business, trade, industrial and economic cooperation.

President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh, in a meeting with Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov during his visit of FPCCI, noted that the Republic of Azerbaijan offers one of the most lucrative markets for Pakistan to enhance its exports on the back of geographical contiguity and availability of land-based trade routes.

As per a statement issued here, FPCCI president while discussing

with the Azerbaijan envoy business-to-business and people-to-people opportunities between the two brotherly countries, also highlighted pivotal role of trade diplomacy in trade facilitation and better trade negotiations.

To his opinion close coordination in the form of regular meetings with trade bodies and chambers of commerce of both the countries will be greatly beneficial in promotion of trade and economic activities.

The Azerbaijan envoy especially underlined that the successful official visit of Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif to his country on June 14-15, 2023 which gave strong impetus to the comprehensive and rapid development of strategic relations between the two brotherly countries.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh presenting a souvenir to CEO AMP Keith Svendsen.

## Faysal Bank unveils strong financial results for the Q1'24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Faysal Bank Limited (FBL), one of the leading Islamic banks in Pakistan, continued with its growth stride during the first quarter of 2024, whereby the profit after tax doubled to PKR 6.5 billion as compared to Q1 2023. Earnings per share increased from Rs. 2.12 to Rs. 4.29, while the Bank also declared an interim cash dividend of Rs. 1/- per share, i.e. 10 percent, said a news release here on Thursday.

The total assets reached a new high of Rs. 1.5 trillion, with deposits increasing to Rs. 1.050 trillion and loan book in excess of Rs. 603 billion. Advance-to-Deposit Ratio (ADR) was at a healthy 55 percent, while its Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 18.57 percent, well above the regulatory requirement.

The sound financial performance and the strong balance sheet footing is reflective of the

Bank's solid business fundamentals coupled with prudent risk management practices.

It further solidifies the bank's position as a key player within the Islamic banking segment.

Mian Muhammad Younis, Chairman of Faysal Bank commenting on the performance of the Bank said, "Masha'Allah the results for Q1'24 are a clear indication of the strong foundations that we have laid as a leading Islamic bank and continued commitment of the Board and management." He further thanked the Bank's customers for making Faysal Bank their top preference."

Yousaf Hussain, President and CEO of Faysal Bank said, "Alhamdulillah, our good performance in the first quarter of 2024 is a testament to the sound interplay of the Bank's customer centric approach coupled with excellent Shariah compliant financial and digital products and high quality service.

## PSX loses 80 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday shed 80.49 points, a negative change of 0.11 percent, closing at 71,971.40 points against 72,051.89 points the previous trading day. A total of 798,527,177 shares valuing Rs. 27,542 billion were traded during the day as compared to 599,401,643 shares valuing Rs. 24,459 billion the last day. Some 389 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 173 of them recorded gains and 191 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 25 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 119,648,396 shares at Rs. 4.64 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 79,958,285 shares at Rs. 1.39 per share and Air Unity Foods Limited with 44,276,576 shares at Rs. 24.91 per share.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where nine ships namely, San Francisco, Atlantic Ibis, Marathapolis, MSC Sindy, Sea Pearl, Aisa Liberty, Hansa Oslo, Bateleur and Limra carrying Container, Fertilizer, Palm oil, Gas oil and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Grain Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Oil Terminal, Engro Terminal and Gas Terminal respectively during last. Meanwhile another ship 'Haj Muhammad' scheduled to load/offload Cement also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Kanni Wignaraja, United Nations Assistant Secretary General (ASG), Asia, and the Pacific calls on Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema.

## KPITB, STZA sign agreement to declare Pakistan Digital City Haripur as Special Tech Zone

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) and the Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA) signed an agreement in a ceremony devoted to the "Zone Development Agreement of Pakistan Digital City Haripur (PDC)."

The event, which officially declared PDC Haripur as a Special Technology Zone, is a significant step towards fostering innovation and technology-driven growth in Pakistan. Under this agreement, PDC Haripur will enjoy tax incentives,

making it a tax-free zone for enterprises operating within its premises. IT businesses affiliated with PDC Haripur will benefit from a 10-year tax exemption, incentivizing investment and fostering a conducive environment for technological advancements.

Distinguished guests attending the ceremony include Khalid Latif Khan, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Science & Technology and Information Technology; Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, Secretary ST&IT; and representatives from KPITB.

During his address at the ceremony, Khalid Latif Khan highlighted the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government's commitment to digital transformation under Chief Minister Mr. Ali Amin Gandapur's guidance. The investment of 1642 million rupees in Pakistan Digital City, overseen by NESPAK and National Logistics Cell, signifies KP's vision to establish itself as Pakistan's digital hub. The Pakistan Digital City project, evidence to this vision, aims at stimulating economic growth by attracting national and international.



LAHORE: Farmers protesting in favour of their demands in front of the press club of the Provincial Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Zoe Ware, Political Counsellor at the British High Commission called on the Federal Minister for Privatisation, Investment and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan.

## Kazakh envoy stresses quantum jump in bilateral trade

FAISALABAD (APP): The business community must avail all opportunities to give quantum jump to bilateral trade between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, said Yezhan Kistafin, ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Addressing a selected gathering at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that both countries were enjoying cordial relations, but the business community must translate these ties into economic terms.

He termed the business-to-business (B2B) contacts brother-to-brother relations and said that it had paved the way to fully exploit the

untapped business potential. He said that three cities of Pakistan had already been declared sister cities of Kazakhstan and now Shymkent has been declared sister city of Faisalabad because of their similarities in textile. He urged textile exporters to invest in this city to directly capture the five Eurasian countries including Russia and Belarus.

The ambassador said that an economic zone had been established in Shymkent, which was known for mass production of finished textile products. He said industrialists investing in that economic zone would be exempted from land.



## 155 killed in Tanzania as heavy rains lash East Africa

### Monitoring Desk

**TANZANIA:** At least 155 people have died in Tanzania as torrential rains linked to El Nino triggered flooding and landslides. Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa said on Thursday.

Tanzania and other countries in East Africa — a region highly vulnerable to climate change — have been pounded by heavier than usual rainfall during the current rainy season, with dozens of deaths also reported in Kenya.

Majaliwa said more than 51,000 households and 200,000 people have been affected by the rains, with 155 fatalities and 236 injured.

“The heavy El Nino rains, accompanied by strong winds, floods, and landslides in various parts of the country, have caused significant damage,” Majaliwa told parliament in Tanzania’s capital Dodoma.

“These include loss

of life, destruction of crops, homes, citizens’ property, and infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and railways,” he added.

El Nino is a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat worldwide, drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere, and can have a devastating impact in East Africa.

In Burundi, one of the poorest countries on the planet, around 96,000 people have been displaced by months of relentless rains.

In addition, about 45 people have been killed in Kenya since the start of the rainy season in March, including 13 who lost their lives in flash floods in the capital Nairobi this week.

Kenyan President William Ruto convened an emergency multi-agency meeting on Thursday to respond to the crisis after

torrential rains triggered floods that caused chaos across the city, blocking roads and bridges and engulfing homes in slum districts.

Kenyans have been warned to stay on alert, with the forecast for more heavy rains across the country, while officials said people living in the most vulnerable areas would be relocated.

“The government will do whatever it takes, apply all the required resources in terms of money and personnel to make sure that lives are not lost and the people of Kenya are protected from this disaster,” Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua told a press briefing.

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian response agency OCHA said in an update this week that in Somalia, the Gu (April to June) rains are intensifying with flash floods reported since April 19.



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech on Europe in the amphitheatre of the Sorbonne University in Paris, France.

## Israel pummels Gaza after US approves military aid

### Monitoring Desk

**GAZA STRIP:** Israeli warplanes pounded the northern Gaza strip for a second day on Wednesday in a fierce assault that has shattered weeks of comparative calm, and Israel said it was moving forward with plans for an all-out assault on Rafah in the south.

The renewed attacks came after the US Congress approved \$13 billion in military aid for Tel Aviv.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said the Senate’s approval of the aid

package already passed by the House of Representatives sent a “strong message to all our enemies” in a post on social media platform X.

Even though Western countries, including the United States, have pleaded with it to hold back from attacking the city on Gaza’s southern edge, an spokesperson for PM Benjamin Netanyahu’s government said Israel was “moving ahead” with its plans for a ground operation on Rafah, but gave no timeline.

## Taliban gov joins climate change talks for first time

### Monitoring Desk

**KABUL:** The Taliban government has entered the first stage of discussions with the United Nations, donors and non-governmental organisations, over the impact of climate change in Afghanistan, organisers said on Wednesday.

After four decades of war, Afghanistan is ranked as one of the countries least prepared to tackle the effects of climate change that are spurring extreme weather conditions and warping natural environments.

“I think it’s important to underscore the value — in fact, the necessity — of direct engagement, of speaking to each other, laying out our differences, which are real, seeking to work through them,” Blinken said.

“We have an obligation for our people — indeed an obligation to the world — to manage the relationship between our two countries responsibly.”

The Chinese Communist Party secretary for Shanghai, Chen Jining, welcomed Blinken partly in English and spoke of the importance of US businesses to the city.

“Whether we choose cooperation or confrontation affects the well-being of both peoples, both countries and the future of humanity,” Chen told him. The country’s financial capital, Shanghai is often a stepping stone to power in China, with President Xi Jinping previously serving briefly in the city.

## Blinken calls for US, China to manage differences

### Monitoring Desk

**SHANGHAI:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on Thursday on the United States and China to manage their differences “responsibly” as he went on a charm offensive ahead of expected tough talks.

A day before meeting Beijing’s top brass to tackle thorny issues including Russia, Taiwan and trade, Blinken’s visit to Shanghai has seen him sample local food, watch a basketball game and stroll along the city’s famous Bund promenade. Visiting the local Communist Party leader in a room with sweeping views of the Shanghai skyline, Blinken said US President Joe Biden was committed to “direct and sustained” dialogue between the world’s two largest economies after years of mounting tension.

“I think it’s important to underscore the value —

other pressures could weaken and fragment the 27-nation EU.

Macron said Russia must not be allowed to win in Ukraine, and he called for a boost in Europe’s cybersecurity capacity, closer defence ties with post-Brexit Britain, and the creation of a European academy to train high-ranking military personnel.

“There is no defence without a defence industry ... we’ve had decades of under-investment,” he said, adding that Europeans should give preference to buying European military equipment.

“We must produce more, we must produce faster, and we must produce as Europeans,” he said.

Macron said Europe risked falling behind economically in a context where global free-trade rules were being challenged by major competitors.

## ‘Europe could die,’ Macron warns, as he calls for stronger defences

### Monitoring Desk

**PARIS:** President Emmanuel Macron appealed on Thursday for stronger, more integrated European defences and said the continent must not become a vassal of the United States, as he outlined his vision for a more assertive European Union on the global stage.

With just three years left of his second and final term in office, and having lost his parliamentary majority in 2022, Macron, 46, wants to show his critics that he retains the energy and fresh thinking that helped propel him into the presidency in 2017 and that he has not become a lame duck leader.

“There is a risk our Europe could die. We are not equipped to face the risks,” Macron said in his speech at the Sorbonne University in Paris, warning that military, economic, trade and

other pressures could weaken and fragment the 27-nation EU.

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Macron said Europe risked falling behind economically in a context where global free-trade rules were being challenged by major competitors.

## Russia vetoes a UN resolution calling for the prevention of a dangerous nuclear arms race in space

### Monitoring Desk

**UNITED NATIONS:** Russia on Wednesday vetoed a U.N. resolution sponsored by the United States and Japan calling on all nations to prevent a dangerous nuclear arms race in outer space, calling it “a dirty spectacle” that cherry-picks weapons of mass destruction from all other weapons that should also be banned.

The vote in the 15-member Security Council was 13 in favor, Russia opposed and China abstaining.

The resolution would have called on all countries not to develop or deploy nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction in space, as banned under a 1967 international treaty that included the U.S. and Russia, and to agree to the need to verify compliance.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said after the vote that Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Moscow has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons in space.

Russia’s U.N. Ambassador Vasily Nebenza dismissed the resolution as “absolutely absurd and politicized.”

“Today’s veto begs the question: Why? Why, if you are following the rules, would you not support a resolution that reaffirms them? What could you possibly be hiding,” she asked. “It’s baffling. And it’s a shame.”

Putin was responding to White House confirmation in February that Russia has obtained a “troubling” anti-satellite weapon capability, although such a weapon is not operational yet. U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Wednesday echoed Thomas-Greenfield, reiterating that “the United States assesses that Russia is developing a new satellite carrying a nuclear device.” If Putin has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons in space, Sullivan said, “Russia would not have vetoed this resolution.”

## Post-World War II order on ‘brink of collapse’, says Amnesty

### Monitoring Desk

**LONDON:** The Amnesty International on Wednesday stated that the post-World War II order, was on the “brink of collapse.” It said that bitter conflicts on multiple fronts due to the rapid and unregulated rise of artificial intelligence, are also “threatening.”

“Everything we’re witnessing over the last 12 months is indicating that the international global system is on the brink of collapse,” Amnesty’s secretary general, Agnes Callamard told reporters. She issued these remarks as the group released its annual, “State of the World’s Human Rights” report.

“In particular, over the last six months, the United States has shielded and protected the Israeli authorities against scrutiny for the multiple violations committed in Gaza,” she said.

“By using its veto against a much-needed ceasefire, the United States has emptied out the (United Nations) Security Council of what it should be doing.”

Israel’s onslaught on the Gaza Strip has killed 34,183 people, mostly women and children, according to Gaza’s health ministry.

The global rights body termed that Hamas carried out “horrific crimes” on Israeli communities bordering Gaza but that Israel had responded with “a campaign of collective punishment.”

“It is a campaign of deliberate, indiscriminate bombings of civilians and civilian infrastructure, of denial of humanitarian assistance and an engineered famine,” Callamard wrote in her foreword to the report.

“For millions the world over, Gaza now symbolises utter moral failure by many of the architects of the post-World War Two system,” she said.

Israel’s allies, including those who provide them with arms and ammunition, were complicit, she said. She went to deplore “a lack of action” by international institutions and questioned whether post-war ideals of “never again”, had faded away.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Shanghai Party Secretary Chen Jining at the Grand Halls in Shanghai, China.

## Hamas official says group would lay down its weapons if a two-state solution is implemented

### Monitoring Desk

**ISTANBUL:** A top Hamas political official told The Associated Press the Islamic militant group is willing to agree to a truce of five years or more with Israel and that it would lay down its weapons and convert into a political party if an independent Palestinian state is established along pre-1967 borders.

The comments by Khalil al-Hayya in an interview Wednesday came amid a stalemate in months of talks for a cease-fire in Gaza. The suggestion that Hamas would disarm appeared to be a significant concession by the militant group officially committed to Israel’s destruction.

But it’s unlikely Israel would consider such a scenario. It has vowed to crush Hamas following the deadly Oct. 7 attacks that triggered the war, and its current lead-

ership is adamantly opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state on lands Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

Al-Hayya, a high-ranking Hamas official who has represented the Palestinian militants in negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage exchange, struck a sometimes defiant and other times conciliatory tone.

Speaking to the AP in Istanbul, Al-Hayya said Hamas wants to join the Palestine Liberation Organization, headed by the rival Fatah faction, to form a unified government for Gaza and the West Bank. He said Hamas would accept “a fully sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the return of Palestinian refugees in accordance with the international resolutions,” along Israel’s pre-1967 borders.

## Pro-Palestinian US high school students accuse school of censoring speech

### Monitoring Desk

**WASHINGTON:** Some US students at Washington, D.C.’s Jackson-Reed High School filed a lawsuit on Wednesday alleging the public high school’s administrators censored them by prohibiting pro-Palestinian events.

The lawsuit said administrators treated the Arab Student Union, a student club at the high school, differently from other groups like the Black Student Union and the Asian Student Union by restricting its activities.

“For the past four months, it [the Arab Student Union] and its members have been trying to engage in expressive activities at the high school — showing a documentary film, putting up posters, distributing literature, presenting a cultural programme — but have been stopped at every turn by the school administration.”

## Gaza could surpass famine thresholds in six weeks, UN official says

### Monitoring Desk

**GENEVA:** The Gaza Strip could surpass famine thresholds of food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality in six weeks, an official from the World Food Programme said on Wednesday (Apr 24). “We are getting closer by the day to a famine situation,” said Gian Carlo Cirri, Geneva director of the World Food Programme (WFP).

“There is reasonable evidence that all three famine thresholds — food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality — will be passed

in the next six weeks.”

A UN-backed report published in March said that famine was imminent and likely to occur by May in northern Gaza and could spread across the enclave by July. On Tuesday, a US official said the risk of famine in Gaza, especially in the north, was very high. Cirri was speaking at the launch of a report by the Global Network Against Food Crises, an alliance of humanitarian and development actors including United Nations agencies, the World Bank.

## 4 injured as cavalry horses run amok in London

### Monitoring Desk

**LONDON:** A number of military horses, including one covered in blood, ran amok on the streets of central London and injured at least four people on Wednesday.

The horses belong to the Household Cavalry, which acts as the British monarch’s official bodyguard and takes part in ceremonial duties.

They are garrisoned at Hyde Park barracks, less than a mile away from Buckingham Palace.



Zainul Abideen Abid, an official of Afghanistan’s environment protection agency and Terje Watterdal, who heads the Norwegian Committee for Afghanistan, address a joint press conference in Kabul.

## India’s poll panel seeks responses to complaints against Modi, Rahul Gandhi

### Monitoring Desk

**RAJASTHAN:** India’s Election Commission said on Thursday it sought responses from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition Congress on alleged violations of poll rules by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and opposition leader Rahul Gandhi.

India is holding the world’s largest election over seven phases, with votes due to be counted on June 4.

In their complaints to the commission, the BJP accused Gandhi and Congress accused Modi of making divisive speeches on religion, caste and linguistic

issues, notices from the panel said.

Modi, who is seeking a rare third consecutive term, referred to Muslims as “infiltrators” and “those who have more children” during a campaign speech on Sunday, drawing widespread criticism from opposition groups and a complaint from Congress to the poll panel.

The BJP has said in its complaint that Gandhi sought to create divisions based on linguistic and cultural issues. The election panel has sought responses from BJP president JP Nadda and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge by April 29.

## Australian police charge five teenagers in Sydney cleric’s stabbing

### Monitoring Desk

**SYDNEY:** Australian police said on Thursday they charged five teenagers with terrorism-related offences in investigations following the stabbing of an Assyrian Christian bishop while he was giving a livestreamed sermon earlier this month.

The five boys, who were due in children’s court on Thursday, were arrested on Wednesday in the Sydney region. Police said they were associates of a 16-year-old boy previously charged in the knifing of Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel.

## Russia, Ukraine to exchange displaced children in Qatar brokered deal

### Monitoring Desk

**KYIV:** Russia and Ukraine have agreed in a Qatari-brokered deal to exchange almost 50 children displaced by Moscow’s invasion, the Kremlin’s children’s rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova announced in Doha Wednesday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Wednesday that 16 Ukrainian children previously “deported to Russia” had been reunited with their families. “A group of 16 Ukrainian children ... have been released and reunited with their families” in Qatar.

“Everything we’re witnessing over the last 12 months is indicating that the international global system is on the brink of collapse,” Amnesty’s secretary general, Agnes Callamard told reporters. She issued these remarks as the group released its annual, “State of the World’s Human Rights” report.

“In particular, over the last six months, the United States has shielded and protected the Israeli authorities against scrutiny for the multiple violations committed in Gaza,” she said.

“By using its veto against a much-needed ceasefire, the United States has emptied out the (United Nations) Security Council of what it should be doing.”

## EU military officer says a frigate has destroyed a drone launched from Yemen’s Houthi-held areas

### Monitoring Desk

**NICOSIA:** A top European Union military officer said that a frigate that’s part of an EU mission in the Red Sea to protect merchant shipping destroyed a drone launched from an area in Yemen controlled by Houthi rebels on Thursday morning.

Austrian Gen. Robert Brieger, who is chair of the EU’s military committee, said that it would be crucial for the bloc to “conserve resources” over the long haul because the threat posed by Houthi attacks “will not disappear” due to its connection to the Israel-Hamas war.

“The task given to the military is simply to protect merchant ships and to show the public that the European Union is not willing to accept a terrorist organization will interrupt the

freedom of movement at sea,” Brieger said.

Brieger said that he’s asking EU members to provide the necessary resources to the EU mission dubbed Aspidos — Greek for “shields.”

He said that it’s the first time that the EU has launched a naval operation in a hostile environment that’s twice the size of the 27-nation bloc, calling it a “litmus test” that the bloc will pass successfully.

The commander of an EU naval mission in the Red Sea, Greek Rear Adm. Vasilios Gryparis, wants to significantly increase its size to better defend against possible attacks by Houthi rebels based in Yemen. Nineteen of the 27 EU nations are involved in the mission, but only four frigates are patrolling an area twice the size of the bloc.

## More than 100 inmates escape after rain damages Nigerian prison

### Monitoring Desk

**ABUJA:** At least 118 inmates escaped from prison after heavy rains on Wednesday night damaged the facility in Suleja near the Nigerian capital, a prison service spokesperson said.

The downpour, which lasted several hours, wrecked parts of the medium-security prison, including the perimeter wall and surrounding buildings, spokesperson Adamu Duza said in a statement on Thursday.

Service agents were hunting the fugitives and had so far recaptured 10 of them with the help of other security agencies. “We are in hot chase to recapture the rest,” Duza said.

## TikTok CEO expects to defeat US ban: ‘We aren’t going anywhere’

### Monitoring Desk

**WASHINGTON:** TikTok’s chief executive said on Wednesday the social media company expects to win a legal challenge to block legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden that he said would ban its popular short video app used by 170 million Americans.

“Rest assured - we aren’t going anywhere,” CEO Shou Zi Chew said in a video posted moments after Biden signed the bill that gives China-based ByteDance 270 days to di-

vest TikTok’s US assets or face a ban. “The facts and the Constitution are on our side and we expect to prevail again.”

Biden’s signing sets a Jan. 19 deadline for a sale — one day before his term is set to expire — but he could extend the deadline by three months if he determines ByteDance is making progress. Biden is seeking a second term against former President Donald Trump. “We don’t want to see a ban,” White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.



Residents sift through the rubble as they recover their belongings after the Nairobi river burst its banks and destroyed their homes within the Mathare Valley settlement in Nairobi, Kenya.



PM seeks cooperation between Pak, Denmark in agri, energy sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday held a meeting with a delegation led by Chief Executive Officer of APM Terminals and Board Member AP Miller Mearks Keith Svendsen and discussed matters related to business and investment.



QUETTA: Commander West Pakistan Navy Rear Admiral Adnan Majeed (SI-Military) meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

To learn modern skills to new generation We direly need support, guidance of Intl. organizations: Governor

Independent Report QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stressed that we desperately need support and guidance of the international organizations for learning modern skills to the younger generation and increase capacity of the officers in the government departments.



QUETTA: Advisor Women Development Department Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi visiting WDD Directorate

300,000 driving professionals needed in Europe: Youth of Balochistan would be provided opportunities of livelihood in Europe, ME: CM

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that youth of the province would be provided opportunities of livelihood in Europe and Middle East.



QUETTA: Secretary Information Imran Khan expressing views during a consultative meeting regarding imposition of Law for Access of Information in Balochistan. DGPR Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetran and other officers are also present



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal chairs a meeting to review progress over CPEC Joint Group Works and upcoming 13 JCC.

IHC adjourns cipher case hearing against PTI founder till April 20

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday adjourned hearing till April 30, on appeals against the conviction of PTI founder and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in cipher case.

Wasay, Vawda take oath as Senators

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani on Thursday administered the oath to newly-elected two members Faisal Vawda and Abdul Wasay of the upper house of the Parliament.

Panel of Presiding officers announced

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani on Thursday announced the panel of Presiding officers to act in absence of both the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

ADB operations reach \$23.6 bln in 2023, achieve record climate finance

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed \$23.6 billion from its own resources in 2023, including \$9.8 billion for climate action, to help Asia and the Pacific progress on sustainable development.

President stresses joint efforts to control Malaria

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday urged all provincial governments and stakeholders to collaborate in controlling the spread of malaria and make Pakistan a malaria free country.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister and Chairman BFA Noor Muhammad Dummer presiding over a meeting at Balochistan Food Authority headquarter

MQM-P 'agrees' on removal of Tessori

KARACHI (INP): The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) changed its strategy for the appointment of Governor Sindh as Kamran Khan Tessori is likely to be replaced by another party colleague.



QUETTA: Awami National Party Central Leader, Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai along with others addressing a Press conference held at Quetta press club.

U.S. Embassy funds campaign on gender based violence in Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): In a collaborative effort to combat the pervasive issue of gender-based violence (GBV), Balochistan Police has been implementing a pioneering awareness and advocacy campaign.

People are getting nothing, will we go on paying all the money in salaries: CJP

KARACHI (Online): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has remarked "talk about the people. They are getting what. Roads, water and electricity, what they are getting. Will we go on paying the entire money in salaries.."

The court remarked "you were contract employee. Read the appointment letter. The CJP Qazi Faez Isa remarked we know what is done in committee. List comes that these have to be appointed. The CJP observed only employees are being appointed. Where they are serving the people, we will see what the government departments are doing."

project. Later it returned the employees. The CJP remarked we have not to run the government. They themselves should run the government. The counsel said the appointments were made under the package of president and governor.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairing a review meeting of Welfare Board's Affair.

CM to send 400 children of labourers to residential higher education institutions

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has announced to send 400 children of labourers to the higher residential educational institutions of the country.

child of labourer would also study there where child of a rich person studies. He said that the expenses of education and accommodation of the children of labourers would be paid from the Labour Welfare Fund. He said that the talented child of labourer would become an officer, doctor, engineer and successful human being instead of a labourer.

He said that the laws for 19,000 registered labourers don't match with the ground reality, therefore, there was need to make necessary legislation in this regard, adding he stressed. The Chief Minister directed to send viable recommendations to the Law department for wetting within three days in order to make necessary amendments in the laws.

Three new bills introduced in Senate

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as three government bills including the Election (Amendment) Bill, 2024, the Motion Pictures (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Establishment of Special Court (Overseas Pakistanis Property) Bill, 2023 were introduced in the Senate on Thursday.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh meeting with Provincial Minister Mir Sadiq Umrani. IG Motorway Police Muhammad Salman Chaudhry is also present

Zarin Magsi vows to fulfil commitments made with people

Independent Report QUETTA: The newly elected Member of Provincial Assembly, Nawabzada Zarin Magsi has vowed to serve the masses fulfilling promises made with them during the elections.

fourth day after elections. He said that we would fulfill the commitments made with the people and would always remain with them. He said that he would never forget the love, affection and honour he got from the people of Lasbela. Nawabzada Zarin Magsi said that he is thankful to the party leaders and Jam Kamal Khan who got him elected as MPA. He also thanked the President of Peoples Party, Asif Ali Zardari who gave him honour and withdrew the party candidate in his favour. He said that the people of Lasbela have lot of love and affection with Jam family.

Access to information important for healthy, learned & civilized societies: Imran Khan

Independent Report QUETTA: The Secretary Information, Imran Khan has stated that access to information is important for the healthy, learned and civilized societies as transparency and governance can be improved through it.

meeting was arranged by the National Endowment for Democracy. The Director General Public Relations, Muhammad Noor Khetran, Directors of Public Relations, Syed Tanveer Akhtar, Saeed Ahmed Shahwani, Deputy Director Syed Jaffar Shah, Assistant Directors Taimur Kakar, Manzoor Ahmed Magsi and Abdul Bari Mandokhail also attended.

Right to Information was enforced in 2021 in Balochistan. The Information commission has been formed in federation and other provinces, however effective steps are being taken for formation of Information commission in Balochistan as well, the Secretary Information mentioned adding that Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners would be appointed soon.