

# Independent

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Karachi

Ph: 0300-3898091 Vol: 06. No. 78 Shawwal 06, 1445 AH Monday April 15, 2024 Pages 04 Price Rs. 12.00

## Bilawal Bhutto calls for 'Charter of Reconciliation' among all political parties

PPP chief warns of dictatorship if politicians do not focus on national reconciliation

GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (INP): PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that all politicians and political parties should work on a 'Charter of National Reconciliation' to avoid fighting with each other and shun politics of foul language.

"Rather than playing dharna dharna, we should sit on the table and have a political dialogue to bring improvement in our system, democracy, and institutions through amendments," he said while addressing a large crowd in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Sindh on Sunday.

The PPP chief's recommendation comes as the newly formed alliance of opposition parties Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Amin will launch a massive movement.

This alliance kicked off its protest movement against alleged rigging in the February 8 general elections



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing a gathering on the occasion of the 45th death anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

from Balochistan by staging two separate public gatherings in Pishin and Chaman on Saturday.

Without naming the multi-party confab, Bilawal described it as the "PNA (Pakistan National Alliance) 2" and added that the alliance was beating drums for alleged vote-rigging to cause "economic and political instability."

He reminded the parties of the result of such movements, warning them

of the risk of dictatorship in the country. "When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the PM of this country, some conspirators like 'nine stars' started a campaign and thought that they would oust Bhutto and come into power. But because of their campaign Pakistan had to bear dictatorship for 10 years and this risk exists today," he said while addressing a large crowd in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Sindh

on Sunday. The country would not develop and democracy would be at the receiving end if politicians make such an environment and not focus on national reconciliation and are involved in politics of bad-mouthing.

While advising the politicians to "come to their senses", he called for dialogue between political parties. The PPP chief added that the party would try to provide relief to the people in the provinces ruled by them.

He also mentioned about the 'Charter of Democracy', saying that the party achieved 90% of its target under the agreement. The remaining 10 per cent was related to the judicial reforms, he said and hoped to do it with all parties, legal fraternity, and civil society.

Bilawal called for reviving people's trust in the national institutions. Every worker of the PPP wants

the implementation of the charter of democracy, he said.

President Asif Ali Zardari also addressed the people. He shunned the impression that Pakistan was a poor country and blamed the "thinking, understanding and soft-headed" of 'Babus in Islamabad'.

He said that such thinking has made Pakistan a poor state, reiterating that the country was not poor.

The country has everything, but lacks intellectual capacity, Zardari said and called for sitting together. "What is in power? Power is about people's service and we fight for it," he said and stressed the need for dialogue.

"If you cannot come to that point then withdraw. The PPP for the past 40 years have been fighting. Sometimes it withdraws, advances, sidesteps and takes a front step," the president said and called for thinking before taking any step.

### President Zardari says PPP will continue to support govt to achieve economic stability

GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari says Pakistan People's Party will continue to support the government for economic stability and prosperity in the country.

He was addressing the public gathering on 45th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto in Larkana on Sunday.

The President said Pakistan is blessed with vast potential of minerals and natural resources and we will emerge from current economic crisis through exploitation of these resources.

Paying tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he said Bhutto family always sacrificed their lives for the country and people.

President Zardari thanked the people for supporting their confidence on Pakistan People's Party in general elections.

The President assailed the bureaucracy in Islamabad saying Pakistan was not a poor country but it had been made so by mindset of the 'babus' [officials] sitting in the capital. Zardari recounted how former prime minister Benazir Bhutto had appointed him as the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, despite doubts from some friends about his leadership capabilities.

The president emphasised that Pakistan's status as a poor nation was not predetermined, adding that despite Allah's provision of abundant wealth, the nation suffered from a lack of intellect. Zardari stressed the importance of cultivating a mindset that seeks to understand and address the country's challenges comprehensively.

### Mayor says efforts to drain rainwater under way as Karachi receives showers

KARACHI: Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab said on Sunday that efforts were under way to drain rainwater from the main arteries after rainfall hit parts of the metropolises.

According to the met office, Surjani Town received the most rain (29mm), followed by Nazimabad (21.2mm) and Gulshan-i-Hadeed (20mm).

Rainfall was also recorded in PAF Faisal Base (19mm), Kemari (19mm), PAF Mansoor Base (18mm), Korangi (17mm), Met Office University road (15.7mm), Airport Old area (15.1mm), North Karachi (15mm), Saadi Town (15mm), Orangi Town (14.4mm), Saddar (13mm) and Malir (12mm).

Jinnah Terminal (1.2mm), Quaidabad (5mm) and Defence Phase II (5.5mm) received light showers whereas areas such as Gaddap, and Gulshan-i-Maymar received no rain.

In a post on X, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab said, "The staff is busy clearing rainwater from [areas] where it has collected."

The mayor said he visited various areas of Karachi, including Naagin Chowrang and KDA Chowrang, where he appreciated the teams working to deal with the rain situation.

"The rain is continuing for the past three hours and the main arteries are clear," he claimed.

In another post, Wahab said that all staff of the KMC, Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation, and Sindh Solid Waste Management Board were present on the ground to tackle the rain situation.

"For the first time, vehicles with suction, jetting and pumping features have also been deputed on major arteries to deal with the situation," he added.

He later said that water accumulated on the Korangi side of Qayyumabad Roundabout was being drained.

According to a weather forecast issued today, the PMD said "intermittent rain/thunderstorms of moderate intensity with isolated heavy falls" were expected today in Karachi.

### Joint session of parliament rescheduled

ISLAMABAD (Online): The joint session of parliament has been rescheduled.

According to Parliamentary affairs sources, the joint session of parliament will take place on April 18 instead of April 16.

President Asif Ali Zardari will address the joint session of parliament on the commencement of new parliamentary year.

The joint session will be attended by prime ministers of AJK and GB, chief ministers of all the four provinces, governors and all the three services chiefs will attend the joint session of parliament.

Arrangements have been made in guests gallery for foreign ambassadors in order to participate in joint session.



GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing a gathering on the occasion of the 45th death anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

## Iran warns Israel against retaliation, global powers urge restraint

US will not take part in retaliatory action against Iran, says White House

### Monitoring Desk

JERUSALEM: Iran warned Israel and the United States on Sunday of a much larger response if there is any retaliation for its mass drone and missile attack on Israeli territory overnight, as Israel said "the campaign is not over yet".

The threat of open warfare erupting between the arch Middle East foes and dragging in the United States has put the region on edge as Washington said America did not seek conflict with Iran but would not hesitate to protect its forces and Israel.

Iran launched the attack over Israeli strike on its consulate in Syria on April 1 that killed top Revolutionary Guards commanders and followed months of clashes between Israel and Iran's regional allies, triggered by the war in Gaza.

However, the attack from hundreds of missiles and drones, mostly

launched from inside Iran, caused only modest damage in Israel as most were shot down with the help of the US, Britain and Jordan.

An Air Force base in southern Israel was hit, but continued to operate as normal and a 7-year old child was seriously hurt by shrapnel. There were no other reports of serious damage. "We intercepted, we repelled, together we shall win," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on social media ahead of a planned 1230 GMT meeting of the war cabinet to discuss a response to the attack.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said despite thwarting the attack, the military campaign was not over and "we must be prepared for every scenario".

Israel's Channel 12 TV cited an unnamed Israeli official overnight as saying there would be a "significant response" to the attack. Iranian Foreign Min-

ister Amir Abdollahian said Tehran had informed the United States its attack on Israel would be "limited" and for self defence. He said Israel's neighbours had also been informed of its planned strikes 72-hours in advance.

Global powers Russia, China, France and Germany as well as Arab states Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates urged restraint.

"We will do everything to stop a further escalation," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told reporters during a visit to China. "We can only warn everyone, especially Iran, against continuing this way."

Turkey also warned Iran it did not want further tension in the region. The Islamic Republic's mission to the United Nations said its actions were aimed at punishing "Israeli crimes", but that it now "deemed the matter concluded".



KARACHI: Palestine Foundation stages a protest demonstration against Israeli genocide in Gaza at Karachi Press Club

### President, PM felicitate Sikh community on Baisakhi festival

ISLAMABAD (Online) President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have felicitated Sikh community on the celebration of Baisakhi festival.

In their message on this event, they said that this occasion gives message of love, happiness, peace and affection. He said that Pakistan felt pride over its diverse cultural heritage.

The President said that Pakistan will ensure all steps to facilitate the Sikh community.

In his felicitation message, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Government of Pakistan and all the provincial governments are ensuring provision of all facilities to the Sikh Yatees who were visiting their religious places in Pakistan.

Shehbaz Sharif termed Baisakhi as the festival of spreading love and happiness. Prime Minister proudly said that Pakistan was a beautiful blend of different faiths and culture and the colours of Baisakhi further add to this beauty.

### Pakistan concerned over ongoing developments in ME, calls for restraint

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday said Pakistan was watching with deep concern the ongoing developments in the Middle East (ME) and called upon all the parties to exercise the utmost restraint and move towards de-escalation.

"Today's developments demonstrate the consequences of the breakdown of diplomacy. These also underline the grave implications in cases where the UN Security Council is unable to fulfill its responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security," the Foreign Office

Spokesperson said in a press statement. It was now critically urgent to stabilize the situation and restore peace, it was further stressed.

The spokesperson said that for months, Pakistan had underlined the necessity of international efforts to prevent the expansion of hostilities in the region and for immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

On April 2, Pakistan had pointed to the dangers of an attack on the Iranian consular office in Syria as a major escalation in an already volatile region, it was added.

### Three dead, 8 injured in collision between two buses

KARACHI (INP): At least three people including two baby girls were killed and eight were seriously injured when two passenger buses collided with each other at Superhighway, in Karachi.

As per rescue sources, two passenger buses collided with each other near Joghia Morr at Superhighway as the drivers lost control of vehicles due to rain.

As a result, three people including two baby girls and eight people were seriously injured.

The injured and bodies were moved to the Jinnah Hospital. As per initial reports, the identity of the injured could not be revealed.

Parts of Karachi received light to moderate rain on Sunday morning due to the influence of a westerly wave. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast thunderstorms accompanied by heavy rain in Karachi will persist till April 15.



SEHWAN: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah talking to media persons in Sehwan.

### Sindh CM directs relevant departments to remain alert amid rain forecast

**Independent Report** KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah has directed all relevant departments to remain alert in view of rain forecast in different areas of the province.

Talking to media at Sehwan Sharif, he said the provincial government would spare no effort to prevent any loss due to heavy rainfall.

Meanwhile in anticipation of heavy rainfall, the Government of Sindh has issued a high alert for all municipalities, administrative bodies, and hospitals across the province.

Chief Secretary of Sindh, Syed Asif Haider Shah, has instructed all relevant authorities to remain on high alert during the ex-

pected rainfall. Addressing all commissioners and deputy commissioners, Mr. Shah emphasized ensuring the effective drainage of rainwater from major thoroughfares and low-lying areas. He directed the Water Board, Karachi Electric, WASA, and Cantonments to stay prepared to handle any emergency situations. Additionally, Chief Secretary urged the installation of de-watering pumps on key city roads and emphasized the completion of all necessary arrangements in districts to tackle any exigencies. Simultaneously, under the supervision of Director Demolition, Mr. Abdul Sajjad Khan, a Rain Emergency Center has been established in Sindh Building Control Authority. Ac-

ording to Abdul Rasheed Solangi, Director-General of Sindh Building Control Authority, technical staff in the Rain Emergency Center will be on duty in shifts of twenty-four hours to manage any emergent situations.

Leaves for staff have been canceled. Furthermore, a campaign has been initiated to vacate residents of 515 dilapidated and dangerous buildings to ensure their safety. According to Engineer Asadullah Khan, Chief Operating Officer of the Water Corporation said that on the special directives of the Chief Minister of Sindh, the Chief Secretary of Sindh, and the Mayor of Karachi, various sections of the city's important roads are equipped with machinery.

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### Sharif family afraid of Qaidi No. 804, says Umar Ayub

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: The central Secretary General of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) and leader of Opposition in National Assembly, Umar Ayub Khan has stated that he want supremacy of law and constitution in the country, and nothing else for the movement has been started for protection of the constitution.

He believed that the coming era of government is of PTI after the incum-

bent government of Form 47 would be winded-up. He claimed that the government formed through Form 47 would no more run. The senior leader of PTI was addressing hurriedly called press conference before his departure from Quetta on Sunday morning.

Umar Ayub had come to Quetta to participate in the protest public meetings held in Pishin and Chaman besides attending the crucial meeting of the six-parties alliance, which

are part of the movement for protection of constitution in the country.

A leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Sharif Khilji also announced to join the PTI after resigning from his party. Also present on the occasion were leaders of PTI including Akhunzada Hussain, Dawood Shah Kakar, Noor Khan Khilji, Muhammad Asif Tareen, Sardar ZainulAbdin Khilji, Barat Khan Khilji, Khurshed Kakar, Najeebullah Kharoti, Siddiq Tareen and others.



HYDERABAD: Fire fighters extinguishing burning bus which caught fire due to electric short circuit, at M-9 Motorway in Hyderabad.



## Pakistan economic growth forecast to rise 2.8% in FY2025, ADB reports

ISLAMABAD (INP): In Pakistan, growth is forecast to rise at 1.9% in FY2024 (ending on 30 June 2024) and 2.8% in FY2025, up from the 0.2% contraction last fiscal year. Gwadar Pro stated on Sunday quoting Asian Development Bank (ADB) economic forecasts report for Asia April 2024. According to the report, the shift back to positive growth will come from a recovery in both agriculture and industry. However, domestic demand will remain constrained by the surge in living costs and tight macroeconomic policies. Growth is projected to remain subdued in FY2024 and pick up in FY2025, provided economic reforms take effect. Real GDP is projected to grow by 1.9% in FY2024 driven by a rebound in private sector investment linked to progress on reform measures and transition to a new and more stable government. An expansion in private consumption and a rise in workers' remittances from a move toward a market-determined exchange rate should buttress growth. However, low confidence, to support recovery in industrial output in the latter half of the year. Construction will remain weak due to elevated construction costs, higher tax rates on property transfers implemented in the FY2024 budget, and rationalization of public investment to consolidate the fiscal position. Growth in services is projected to strengthen in FY2024 as recovery in agriculture and industry benefit services. If reforms are implemented, growth is forecast to restart gradually this fiscal year and improve slightly next year. Inflation is projected to moderate somewhat this year, and more next year, under stabilization policies. Improving women's financial inclusion is critical to strengthen growth.



FAISALABAD: Women are buying clothes on a stall at Sunday weekly bazaar in the city.

## Central bank needs to review credit policies in SMEs favor: Anjum Nisar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has said that the central bank needs to review its credit policies by fixing a special quota to finance the small and medium enterprises, as only the large industries have been availing government's all major concessional export loaning facilities, with very limited financing is left for the SMEs which are the backbone of the economy, contributing around 40 percent to the national gross domestic product (GDP).

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that the government with a view to help grow the businesses will have to take solid measures to strengthen the industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. He said the government will have to make a visible reduction in markup rate to help grow the businesses, particularly the SME

sector, as Pakistan needs millions of jobs annually. Mian Anjum Nisar said that we need to highlight the critical role of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in driving sustainable economic development in Pakistan. With an estimated 5.2 million businesses, the SME sector was a cornerstone of our economy, fostering employment, growth, and export diversification, he added.

He observed that despite their significance, more than 5 million SMEs face a significant credit gap, receiving limited credit, far below the neighboring countries. The State Bank of Pakistan is committed to increasing SME credit share to 17% by 2023. To achieve this, we must advocate for targeted and fixed SME allocations in concessional financing schemes, particularly those aimed at the export-oriented sector.

The FPCCI former President said that the State Bank of Pakistan has launched various policies for the promotion of SME finance.

## Locals demand restoration of train

SARGODHA (APP): Social circles and traders have demanded railways authorities to restore the Sandal Express train in the larger interest of people of the area.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, traders including Chaudhry Muzammil of Sargodha, Muhammad Yaseen of Jhang, Muhammad Noman of Khanewal and Muhammad Atta of Multan said that the Sandal Express used to run from Sargodha to Multan via Shaheenabad, Sillanwali, Shah Nikdur, Shah Jewna, Jhang, Shortkot and Khanewal but railway authorities suspended it operation three years ago

due to unknown reasons. They said they would send and bring their goods by the train at a cheaper fare, and now they had to bear an extra burden of fare by road. They demanded railways authorities to restore the train as early as possible for the interest of traders, commuters and other people.

Tanveer Ahmed, a resident of Shah Nikdur, who used to travel daily from Shah Nikdur to Sargodha by the train, said the train was the best and cheaper source of travel for daily commuters, and now, after the suspension of the train operation he had to commute daily by bus or van.



LAHORE: People are buying steel crockery in Sunday weekly bazaar at Shadman area, in the Provincial Capital.

## FBR completes preparations for action against tax evaders

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has completed preparations for action against tax evaders.

According to FBR sources, within a few days, final notices will be issued to tax evaders, traders, and industrialists, who will also be sent notices. Their assets, and extravagant expenditures, do not match their tax data; some traders' tax is only a few thousand while their annual income runs into billions.

Sources say that many have purchased multiple plots and are also running businesses outside, sometimes allowed to pay their taxes, they turn their black money white.

Lists of most traders and industrialists have been made, including Akbari, Shah Alam Market, Azam Cloth Market, Anarkali, Liberty Market Road, and Gulberg. Ferozepur Road, Model Town, and all other plazas are included.

**SNGPL imposes Rs 132,000 fine on eight consumers**

MULTAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) has imposed a fine Rs 132,000 on eight different consumers for illegal use of gas. Official sources told on Sunday that two consumers were using domestic gas meters on a commercial basis. Their connections were cut by the department team. Similarly, another four consumers were offering illegal connections to some other homes. Action was taken against another two consumers for violations.

The team imposed a fine of Rs 132,000 on the consumers. The SNGPL administration also vowed to continue action against the illegal consumers.



CHINIOT: Farmers harvesting wheat crop starting from 1st of Besakh Month.

## PAJCCI commend Railways over increasing its revenue, suggests launching of cargo trains

PESHAWAR (APP): Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) has commended Pakistan Railways over increasing its annual revenue to highest peak of Rs. 66 billion in nine months of current year and has suggested for launching of cargo trains to further piling up of earnings.

In a press statement issued here on Sunday, Coordinator PAJCCI KP, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said it is appreciating development that Pakistan Railways has increased its annual revenue to record height.

The phenomenal jump in earnings reflect revival of people's confidence on Railways in the wake of better management decisions taken by Chairman Mazhar Ali Shah and GM, Amir

Baloch for provision of improved travelling facilities, opined Zia who is also Member Advisory Committee of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Pakistan Railways.

He said Railways is safest and cheapest travelling facility in the country but due to some management loopholes, travelers had diverted to buses and other mode of travelling.

If such decisions were kept on taking, more people will prefer travelling in trains and revenue will increase with passage of time, he opined.

Coordinator PAJCCI also suggested Pakistan Railways to focus on launching of cargo trains from Karachi to Peshawar for facilitation of business community especially

those dealing in Pak-Afghan trade.

He said Railways should also cater to transportation of loose cargo being sent by exporters and importers within the country.

By focusing on plying of cargo trains, Railways can triple its annual earnings from existing ones besides providing relief to people especially business community who have to pay exorbitant rates to truck owners for transportation of goods.

Zia said in the wake of increase in prices of petroleum products, fare for transportation of goods from port city (Karachi) to Peshawar through heavy vehicles has increased manifold, inflicting huge burden on business community of the country.

## Economic growth linked to durable regional peace

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has advocated the cause of achieving durable peace in the region, a prerequisite to economic growth, prosperity and development for all countries of South Asia.

Talking to a delegation of traders led by Muslim Khan Bunerri from KP here Sunday, he said South Asia has long been plagued by instability and conflicts that have hindered the region's progress and potential. One of the major concerns contributing to this instability has been the presence of terrorist sanctuaries on Afghan soil, which have posed a severe threat not only to

neighboring countries including Pakistan, he added. He said counterterrorism cooperation and collaboration closely with regional and international stakeholders, especially Pakistan, to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries can help eradicate the breeding grounds for extremist elements and bring about much-needed stability.

About economic integration, he said, "We must embrace economic integration initiatives within the South Asian region and enhanced economic cooperation can create an environment conducive to peace, prosperity, and development for all."

He believed that by taking these steps,

## Prices of most capital goods fall in China

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): Most of the capital goods monitored by China's statistics authorities registered price decreases from late-March to early-April, official data shows.

Of the 50 major goods classified in nine categories, including seamless steel tubes, gasoline and fertilizer, 26 saw price declines, 20 reported heightened prices, and 4 remained unchanged, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Hog prices increased 0.7 percent to 15.3 yuan (about 2.16 U.S. dollars) per kg during this period, the NBS said.

The figures, released every 10 days, are based on the survey of nearly 2,000 wholesalers and distributors in 31 provincial-level regions across the country.



MULTAN: A worker preparing khas for the air cooler at his workplace.

## Large scale structural changes vital in power sector: Chairman PIAF

LAHORE (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Faheemur Rehman Saigol has stressed the need for large scale structural changes in power sector, controlling line losses of DISCOs by using modern technology, and customer-oriented business approach, as the public chequer has incurred a loss of over Rs400 billion in the fiscal year 2022-23 by the power distribution companies.

Quoting the media report, he observed that the performance of distribution companies (DISCOs) throughout 2022-23 remained very poor, and the expected power sector reforms were not achieved. Given the ongoing poor performance, it is apparent that, under the existing circumstances,

the current DISCO setup is unlikely to be able to deliver the desired results.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that no significant improvement has been witnessed on part of some DISCOs in this regard. During FY2022-23, the overall actual losses of DISCOs were 16.38% against the actual loss of 16.69% in FY 2021-22. The actual T&D losses are much higher than the allowed T&D losses for FY 2022-23, which is 12.21%.

He said that unfortunately, the majority of DISCOs have not adhered to the NEPA given targets, except FESCO, GEPCO, and K-Electric which have managed to keep their losses below the levels or equal to targets set by NEPA. However, other DISCOs have exceeded these limits.

## Price controller revises bread loaf rates

RAWALPINDI (APP): The controller of prices and supplies/ Deputy Commissioner has revised the rates of open market loafs (Naan-Roti) in the city. Following the Punjab Price Control of Essential Commodities Ordinance 2023 (V of 2024), the price controller issued a notification regarding the rates.

According to the notification issued on Sunday, the unit price for 100g Roti Tandoori (per loaf) will be Rs. 16.0 and that of 120g Naan (per loaf) will be Rs. 20.0.

The notification intimates that new prices for mentioned essential commodities for the open market will come into force with immediate effect in revenue limits of the district. No person or shopkeeper shall charge or cause to be charged the prices of the aforementioned items offered for sale.

## Punjab CM felicitates PM over improving economic indicators

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, while paying tributes to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on improving Pakistan's economic indicators, said on Sunday that under the vibrant leadership of PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's economy had once again started treading on the path of progress.

The fruits of economic progress during the tenure of PML-N government are prominently coming to surface, Maryam said adding that "the common man would be provided relief with reduction in electricity rates and price-hike. Big international financial institutions including IMF, ADB had acknowledge Pakistan's economic policies."

She said, "Owing to PM Shehbaz Sharif's economic policies, the

investors' confidence is enhancing. For the first time in the history, 100 index Stock Exchange has crossed its 70 thousand psychological barrier."

The chief minister said, "Good news are awaiting Pakistanis and their is a strong likelihood of reduction in inflation rate up to 12.2 per cent next year. For the first time, Rs 500 reduction occurred in the price of 20-kg flour bag and there is further possibility of Rs 300 reduction in the flour price according to market indicators."

"The Economic & Social Survey of Asia & Pacific Region termed Pakistan's economic indicators excellent. In the UN Report, Pakistan's economic progress has been predicted in the next fiscal year. The growth rate would increase from 2 per cent to 2.3 per cent during the current and next financial year in Pakistan."



MULTAN: Labourers off-loading watermelons from a delivery truck at the fruit market.

## Increase in taxes hurt cars' sale, purchase business: APCDA

MULTAN (APP): All Pakistan Car Dealers Association (APCDA) demanded of government to reduce duties, taxes, registration and transfer fees on sale, purchase of cars as the high fees were hurting their business badly.

Vice Chairman All Pakistan Car Dealers Association Chaudhary Tariq Kareem, General Secretary district Multan Abdul Qadir Khan stated that the persons who were linked to sale purchase of cars were worried due to

rising inflation. The high fees including duties, taxes, register and transfer fees on cars also increased manifold. A good number of dealers have left the profession.

They demanded of government to pay focus on condition of car dealers and reduce prices of the cars. Different measures on part of the government could help improve business of car's sale purchase. They also called for reforms in excise and taxation department.



LAHORE: People are buying vegetables in Sunday weekly bazaar at Shadman area, in the Provincial Capital.

## 'Asia has consequential position in the world'

LAHORE (APP): Kyrgyzstan's Honorary Consul Meher Kashif Younis has said that Asia holds a consequential position in the world due to its large population, strategic locations, rich mineral resources and diversity. Presiding over a workshop on "Importance of BRICS for Pakistan" organized by Gold Ring Economic Forum here Sunday, he added that Pakistan, as an important partner in the region has sought membership in order to align with this trend. With its abundant natural resources, strategic location and fifth-largest world population, Pakistan's absence from BRICS could have repercussions in the future

if not addressed. He said Pakistani leadership should consider BRICS while assessing ground realities. He said BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) can pave the way for sustainable development and growth in the region. New doors for trade and investment will be opened under the supervision of developed countries like China and Russia.

He said the individual who coined BRICS has predicted that these nations' economies will dominate the world by 2050. He said a golden opportunity has been presented to these advancing countries under the leadership of this group.

## Agricultural emergency unit established to help farmers in view of rains

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government has set up an Agricultural Emergency Rapid Response Unit to help the farmers in view of the rains in the province and the leaves of all the employees and officers of the agriculture department have been cancelled.

On the directives of the Sindh Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Baksh Mahar, the leaves of all the officers and employees of the Sindh Agriculture Department have been

cancelled and the staff has been instructed to remain alert. A spokesman for the Sindh Agriculture Department said that the DG Agriculture Head of Agriculture Emergency Rapid Response and DGs of Research, Engineering Wing and On Farm Management Wing will be part of the team.

He further said that the field assistants of the Department of Agriculture will go door to door to provide information about safety measures to the farmers.

## 100-member Saudi delegation to reach Pakistan on April 16 Saudi Arabia commits \$1b investment in Reko Diq project

ISLAMABAD (INP): Saudi Arabia is set to inject a hefty \$1 billion into the Reko Diq Copper-Gold Project nestled in the scenic Chagai District of Balochistan Province, Pakistan.

The investment is anticipated to take place next month, pending the clearance of any hurdles by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

To ensure a seamless process for Saudi Arabia's investment, the Prime Minister will establish a dedicated committee within the Ministry of Finance. This committee will encompass all relevant stakeholders from Pakistan, ensuring a collaborative approach.

This milestone underscores the fruitful endeavors of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in fostering a conducive environment for foreign investment within the nation.

Such an injection of capital is poised to not only pave the way for further foreign investments but also aligns with SIFC's mandate to spur economic growth.

Following this significant investment, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are expected to ink agreements aimed at strengthening investment within the mining sector.

Online adds: Saudi Arabia has decided to make investment of overall 7 billion dollars in Pakistan.

According to government sources a high level 100-member delegation of Saudi Arabia under Saudi foreign minister prince Faisal bin Farhan will arrive in Pakistan on April 16.

The delegation will include Saudi ministers for investment, water and agriculture, environment, industries, mineral resources and energy.

## Govt committed to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths living in country: Khawaja



ATTOCK (APP): Federal Minister for Defense, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, has said the present government is committed to providing complete religious freedom to people of all faiths living in the country.

He was talking to newsmen after participating in the Bhog ceremony in connection with the Besakhi festival at Gurdwara Punja Sahib Hassanabdal on Sunday.

In his address, he expressed that the Sikh Marriage Act had been passed in 2018, and now it would be implemented soon after the approval of the provincial cabinet.

Earlier, speaking at the Bhog ceremony, Khawaja Asif said that the Pakistani people and government were proud to host the Sikh pilgrims on their holy land.

"The present government believes in the freedom of the minority and would extend all its resources for the better preservation of their sacred places," he added.

amous Baisakhi celebrations, to mark the advent of the order of the \*Khalisa by 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh Ji, were observed at Gurdwara Punja Sahib here today. Around ten thousand Sikh yatrees—among them over 2400 Indians and others from other parts of the world, including Pakistan, India, Canada, and the United Kingdom participated in the festivities.

Baisakhi processions called Nagar Keertan were taken out on the premises of Gurdwara Punja Sahib with traditional performances and religious rites.



DIAMER: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan meeting special persons during his visit.

## Adil Raja loses crucial stage of defamation case to Brig ® Rashid Naseer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Controversial Youtuber Major ® Adil Raja has suffered a crushing blow as a UK High Court Judge rejected all his applications including his application to stay a defamation trial progressing against him by former senior military officer Brigadier ® Rashid Naseer.

The judge ruled that Mr Raja had published words which were seriously defamatory of Rashid Naseer in nine publications on social media sites YouTube, Facebook and Twitter/X.

Deputy High Court Judge Mr Richard Spearman KC ruled that Adil Ferooq Raja should pay £5,000 to the now retired Brigadier for the rejected application to stay the defamation trial and the judge also ordered Adil Raja to pay a further interim payment on account of costs in the sum of £5,000 for the failed security for costs application.

Adil Raja, the defendant, has until 17 April 2024 to pay this money.

With help from his lawyer and PTI UK leader Mahtab Anwar Aziz who also represents PTI activist Shayan Ali, Adil Raja appeared before the court remotely by video link and argued that the case of Brig ® Rashid Naseer should be stayed on a number of grounds but the court rejected all his arguments which included allegations that Pakistan was an authoritarian state in which the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) controlled the Judiciary and the Government and allegations of election rigging in Pakistan.

In the case on meaning, the High Court Judge ruled that 9 out of the 10 publications published by Adil Raja were defamatory of Brig ® Rashid Naseer at common law and were matters of fact, rather than expressions of opinion. Brig ® Rashid Naseer's name had surfaced when former PM Imran Khan named him as Mr 'X' in making wild and baseless allegations—the allegations Khan and his party stepped back from and failed to prove at any forum.

In deciding the meaning of the publications, Deputy High Court Judge Mr Richard Spearman KC ruled that Brig ® Rashid Naseer was defamed at UK common law when Adil Ferooq Raja made the following allegations, without any evidence, in the publications in June 2022.



HYDERABAD: Large number of people enjoying themselves on the bank of River Indus near Ghulam Muhammad Barrage Jamshoro of River Indus, during rainy and cloudy weather.

## UN chief 'condemns' Iran's attack on Israel

NEW YORK (INP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned Iran's attack on Israel following Syria Embassy attack.

UN chief in a statement said: "I strongly condemn the serious escalation represented by the large-scale attack launched on Israel by the Islamic Republic of Iran this evening. I call for an immediate cessation of these hostilities." "I am deeply alarmed about the very real danger of a devastating region-wide escalation. I urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid any action that could lead to major military confrontations on multiple fronts in the Middle East."

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## Bilawal highlights climate crisis amidst rain-related losses in country

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has conveyed heartfelt condolences for the tragic loss of lives resulting from multiple accidents amidst heavy rains across various regions of the nation, notably Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

He also voiced his concern regarding the incidents of lightning strikes exacerbated by the changing climate conditions during the inclement weather. According to the press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House here Sunday, the PPP Chairman lamented the loss of lives caused by lightning strikes as well as other rain-related incidents in South Punjab, including its districts Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Rajanpur and Lodhran. He urged the provincial government to deploy all available resources to fulfill its duty in aiding the rain-affected victims throughout Punjab. Bilawal Bhutto expressed regret over the loss of lives in accidents during the rains in various areas of the province, including the lower and upper Chitral areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and related disaster management agencies to provide immediate assistance to the rain victims, aiding citizens trapped in various problems including landslides. He further conveyed his heartfelt grief and sorrow for the tragic loss of lives and property resulting from lightning strikes and other accidents in various areas of Balochistan, including Chaman, Dera Bugti, and Kohlu. He expressed confidence that the People's government in Balochistan will stand by the rain victims, ensuring they are not left alone during this challenging time.

Bilawal Bhutto highlighted the surge in lightning incidents nationwide as indicative of climate change, emphasizing the imperative role of universities and research institutions in addressing this issue.

He underscored the necessity for exceptional spirit and leadership at the government level to shield citizens from climate change impacts.

## Over 230 candidates vie for 23 vacant seats of NA, PAs: ECP

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 239 candidates were vying for 23 vacant seats in both national and provincial assemblies during the upcoming by-elections slated for April 21, an official of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said.

A total of 239 candidates will contest in the by-elections, with 50 of them competing for vacant National Assembly seats. Notably, the first lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has already been elected unopposed for NA 207, he said.

He said that a total of 23 candidates were vying for the vacant seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, while 154 candidates were seeking their fortunes in Punjab. In Sindh, Zubair Ahmed Junejo secured his seat unopposed on PS-80.

Twelve contenders are in the running for the empty seats in the Balochistan Assembly. The Commission has schedule to commence printing the ballot papers for the by-elections upon the finalization of candidate lists by the relevant returning officers on March 30, he added.

He stated that necessary election materials had been provided to provincial election commissioners.

Additionally, district Returning Officers and Returning Officers are fulfilling their duties according to the established election schedule. He said close coordination has been maintained by the commission with the Ministries of Interior and Defense as well as provincial law enforcement agencies. On March 13, the Commission announced the schedule for by-elections across 23 National and Provincial Assembly seats. These elections encompass six National Assembly seats, twelve Punjab Assembly seats, two seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

## World Bank approves \$1b loan for Dasu Hydropower Project

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan received a much needed boost for its energy sector as the World Bank approved a \$1 billion loan for the 2,160-megawatt Dasu Hydropower Project. This critical infrastructure project aims to provide Pakistan with affordable and reliable electricity.

The loan approval comes after some delays, with initial reports suggesting a May approval. However, government sources now confirm the World Bank's board greenlit the financing in June.

This represents the third major investment by the World Bank in the Dasu project, highlighting its significance for Pakistan's energy future.

Pakistan's current energy woes stem largely from the high cost of electricity generated using imported fuel. This burden is felt across the country, with domestic consumers, factories, and even institutions like mosques and hospitals resorting to installing solar panels to escape the expensive grid.

The Dasu project has faced setbacks in the past, with its initial completion target set for December 2021. However, the World Bank has now set a new target date of 2028 for completion. The project's cost has also increased by 13%, with the World Bank's revised estimate reaching \$4.9 billion.

Despite these challenges, the project offers significant long-term benefits. The World Bank estimates that Dasu will save Pakistan a staggering \$1.8 billion annually in fuel import costs. Additionally, the project is expected to contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 5 million tons per year.

The Dasu Hydropower Project is a significant step towards Pakistan's goal of achieving energy security and economic growth. With the World Bank's renewed commitment, the project is well-positioned to deliver a brighter energy future for the country.



GARHI KHUDBAKHSH: President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Safaraz Ahmed Bugti, President PPP Balochistan Mir Changez Khan Jamali and others offering Dua on eve of death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

## JIT comprising police, army officers formed to investigate Bahawalnagar incident

LAHORE (INP): A six-member Joint Inquiry Team (JIT) comprising officers of police, military and local administration has been constituted to probe the Bahawalnagar incident wherein a faceoff broke out between some police officials and military personnel. The News reported on Sunday. The Punjab Home Department has formed the team and appointed Special Secretary Interior Atta-ur-Rehman as its convener. The JIT also includes the Bahawalpur Division commissioner, DIG police special branch Punjab and of-

icers of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Military Intelligence and Intelligence Bureau.

After short video clips showing dozens of masked men wearing military garbs thrashing cops in Bahawalnagar went viral on social media, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Friday said the Pakistan Army and the Punjab Police had decided to jointly investigate the incident.

The military's media wing in a statement had said an unfortunate incident occurred in Bahawalnagar recently, which was promptly addressed and resolved through collaborative efforts of military and police authorities.

"Despite this, certain factions with vested motives started fanning vitriolic propaganda on social media to create divisions between state institutions and government departments," the statement read.

A string of videos went viral which purportedly showed men in army uniforms beating up police personnel in Bahawalnagar, which drew criticism from different segments of social media.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Saudi Arabia and Pakistani national flags fixed on a green belt in front of Prime Minister Secretariat in the Federal Capital, in connection with Saudi delegation, led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan will visit in Pakistan.

## Repatriation efforts continue as illegal Afghans return home

ISLAMABAD (INP): The repatriation of Afghan nationals from Pakistan continues at a steady pace, with significant progress made as of April 13, 2024. A total of 535,940 illegal Afghans have now returned to their homeland, marking a significant step in the on-going efforts.

Over the past ten days, from April 3 to April 13, a total of 8,581 Afghan citizens have made the journey back home. Among them, 3,127 men, 1,972 women, and 3,482 children have returned.

In a coordinated effort, 310 families have been safely repatriated to Afghanistan, utilizing 287 vehicles for their journey.

## Police arrest dacoit involved in multiple robberies and shootings

KARACHI (INP): The Karachi's Mominabad police apprehended Dacoit Farhan, who was injured during his arrest, police confirmed on Sunday. SSP West Abdul Hafeez Bugti revealed that accused Farhan was involved in a robbery near Orangi Town Football Chowrangi on Eid-ul-Fitr, where he shot and injured a woman. Bugti further disclosed that Farhan, along with his accomplices, was also involved in a robbery at Bahram Store in Site A's Metroval area last month. CCTV footage confirmed his presence during the robbery. The investigation uncovered Farhan's criminal history, including injuring a Suzuki driver by firing during a resistance incident last year and stealing over 2,000 mobile phones through street crimes since 2022.

His accomplices, Adnan and Farhan, were identified as receivers of stolen mobiles, selling them after altering their IMEI numbers. Police have registered cases against Farhan under various provisions, including the Mawa Act, for his past criminal activities in Site A, Mominabad, and Pirabad police stations.

A manhunt is currently underway to apprehend Bilal, Rehman, another Adnan, and Rehman, a resident of Bawani Chali, who are part of Farhan's gang.

## Buner IBO martyr laid to rest in native town



RAWALPINDI (APP): The Buner intelligence-based operation (IBO) martyr was laid to rest in his native town with full military honor on Sunday.

On April 13th during an intelligence-based operation against terrorists in Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Lance Havaldar Mudassar Mehmood, age 35 years, resident of Rawalpindi district had embraced martyrdom while gallantly fighting against the terrorists.

A large number of senior officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army, relatives of the martyr and local people participated in the funeral prayer, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

## Canada sacks Indian staffers working at its diplomatic missions in India

### Monitoring Desk

LONDON: Ties between Canada and India have deteriorated further as the former has dismissed dozens of Indian staffers from service who were working at its diplomatic missions in India over the Indian regime's plan to assassinate pro-Khalistani Sikhs on Canadian soil.

Relations between Canada and India started deteriorating last year when tens of thousands of Canadian Sikhs voted for

Khalistan Referendum in several Canadian cities on the call of Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), led by Gurbatwnt Singh Pannu who is a dual Canadian and US national.

The relations hit rock bottom when Indian assassinated SFJ and Khalistan Referendum's Canada coordinator Hardeep Singh Nijjar at the Canada's biggest Gurdwara in June 2023 and also tried to kill Pannu in New York.

A spokesperson for the Canadian High Com-

mission stated that the reduction in the number of Indian employees was required in light of the country's shrinking Canadian workforce. "I can confirm that the Government of Canada has implemented some staff reductions across our network of missions in India," the official said. The spokesperson, however, said that the high commission expressed its sincere gratitude for the resilience, dedication, and service of its local staff in India.