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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level review meeting regarding power sector

## PM directs for vital measures to reduce power price per unit for common man

Emphasizes maximising renewable energy utilization, improving transmission system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed for drastic measures including shifting of imported coal-run plants, improvement in power supply system, setting up cost effective and renewable energy plants, and functioning of solar projects to reduce cost of electricity per unit thus benefiting the ordinary people.

The prime minister chaired a high level review

meeting regarding the power sector. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari and Dr Mussadik Malik, former minister Muhammad Ali, Member of the National Assembly Bilal Zaheer Kiyani, Rana Ahsan Afzal, Salman Ahmed and relevant authorities, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press

release. The prime minister directed for shifting of the coal-run power plants from the imported fuel to local coal, besides improvement in the power supply system. He said that in future, only clean, cost effective and renewable power plants should be set up in the country. The meeting was apprised of the 600MW solar

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## Saudi FM arrives on two-day visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, leading a high-level delegation, on Monday arrived here on a two-day visit.

Upon arrival at the airport, the Saudi Foreign Minister was received by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and other senior officials.

The Saudi Foreign Minister is heading a high-level delegation comprising Saudi Minister of Water and Agriculture Eng Abdul Rahman Abdul Mohsen Al-Fadley, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Ibrahim AlKhorayef, Deputy Minister of Investment Badr

AlBadr, Head of Saudi Special Committee Mohammad Mazayed Al Towajri, and senior officials from Ministry of Energy and Saudi Fund for General Investments.

"The visit takes place essentially to expedite follow up on the understanding reached between Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Mohammad bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during their recent meeting in Makkah Al Mukarramah to enhance bilateral economic cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia," the Foreign Office, in an earlier press release, said.



RAWALPINDI: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud received by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar upon his arrival at Nur Khan Airbase

## All evidence pointing towards Indian involvement in Lahore gun attack: Naqvi

LAHORE (Agencies): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday indicated that there was evidence of Indian involvement in the Lahore gun attack on Amir Sarfraz Tamba — the man who allegedly killed Indian prisoner Sarabjit Singh in Kot Lakhpat prison in 2013.

Tamba was critically injured in an attack on Sunday, according to police officials. While media reports had initially claimed that he was killed, Lahore Senior Superintendent of Police Operations Syed Ali Raza had clarified that he was alive, although critically injured.

Tamba was at his residence in Lahore's Islampura

area when two masked armed men forcefully entered his home in Ganga Street and fired multiple shots.

They fled the scene, leaving the victim in a pool of blood. He was rushed to a local hospital, where he was being treated.

The interior minister was questioned on Monday about the incident during a press conference at the Federal Investigation Agency's regional office in Lahore and asked to comment on the veracity of the reported Indian involvement.

"India was directly involved in two to four events like this before in assassinations inside Paki-

stan. The police are still investigating but till now their suspicion is exactly the same as yours," he said in response to a reporter's questions.

"At this time, all evidence is pointing towards them (India), it is inappropriate to say more before the investigation is completed but the pattern [of killings] is almost the same."

The attack came days after British publication The Guardian reported that the Indian government assassinated individuals in Pakistan as part of a wider strategy to eliminate "terrorists" living on foreign

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## CM forms fact finding committee for inquiry of urban flooding & damages caused to masses

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has constituted a fact finding committee to probe into the urban flooding and damages caused to the masses at large scale in Quetta city.

According to the spokesman, Government of Balochistan, the Member of Chief Minister Inspection Team would be the Chairman of fact finding inquiry committee.

The members of committee are included: Chief of Section, Planning and Development and Superintending Engineer, P&D.

The spokesman of provincial government said that the fact finding com-

mittee would ascertain the reasons behind the urban flooding in Quetta city. Besides, the committee would pinpoint the flaws that caused urban flooding in Quetta city.

The committee would also inspect all the development schemes of roads and sewerage during last three years in the city.

In addition to this, the committee would also propose steps for preventing the urban flooding in future, the spokesman said.

The committee would give access to the relevant record and staff by the concerned departments, offices and officers so as to conduct comprehensive fact finding inquiry.



ISLAMABAD: President, Asif Ali Zardari congratulating Aseefa Bhutto Zardari on taking oath as Member of the National Assembly

## Another spell of heavy rain expected from 17th: CS directs concerned high ups to make advance preparations before more rains in province

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has directed all concerned high ups to make advance preparations well before more rains in the province.

He also directed to the administration to discharge their duties regarding rescue and relief activities well before the time.

Moreover, the measures should be taken to remove encroachments and hurdles from the nullahs.

All administrative officers should also remain alert to cope with any emer-

gent situation and shift the people to the safer places. These directives were issued by the Chief Secretary while chairing meeting held to review relief activities in the rain affected areas of the province on Monday.

The meeting discussed the situation caused due to the rains besides the situation likely to be created following the expected heavy rains from Wednesday next.

The Chief Secretary was also briefed about the damages caused due to heavy rains in different districts of the province.



QUETTA: Spokesman Government of Balochistan Shahid Rind and MPs Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Mir Liaquat Lehri, Malik Naeem Bazai, Bakhar Muhammad Kakar, Mir Samad Khan Gorgage and Ejaz Sanjrani briefed mediapersons about rain situation and government initiatives

## Aseefa Bhutto takes oath as MNA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, daughter of late former prime minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and sister of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday took oath as a Member of the National Assembly (MNA).

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath to her, who later signed the registration roll.

Aseefa Bhutto was elected unopposed in the by-election in NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad. Her father President Asif Ali Zardari had won the seat in the general election 2024 on February 8 and later vacated it after his election as President of Pakistan.

## Seven districts badly affected due to recent heavy rains in Balochistan: Shahid Rind

Independent Report QUETTA: The spokesman, Government of Balochistan, Shahid Rind has stated that seven districts of the province have been badly affected due to recent rains. The districts affected due to the heavy rains are included: Quetta, Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Chaman, Chaghai, Kech and Gwadar.

He said that seven people were reportedly

killed in different incidents of lightning and roof collapse in the province.

Five of them lost their lives due to lightning in different areas of the province while two died due to collapse of roofs.

However, the rescue and relief activities are continued in the rain affected districts of the province including Quetta, the work of

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## Patrolling of security institutions to be increased at national highways, decides in meeting

Independent Report QUETTA: The meeting chaired by Commissioner Quetta Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat has decided to increase patrolling of the security institutions on the national highways in the Quetta division.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Commissioner Quetta, Soban Dashti, Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Lt. (Retd) Saad bin Asad, Secretary PTA, besides representatives of police, FC, transporters and others.

The meeting decided to review the present security situation on the national highways besides determining the issues and challenges and improving security. In this regard, recommendations and proposals would be prepared for improving security at the national highways. In this regard, gunman would be deployed in the passenger coaches within seven days.

Moreover, the CCTV cameras would be installed in the coaches, it was also decided.



QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over a meeting regarding situation arises after recent rains in the province and relief activities

## Petrol price hiked by Rs4.53 per litre

Monitoring Desk ISLAMABAD: The federal government has increased the price of petrol for next fortnight by Rs4.53 per litre in line with the hike in the global oil rates.

According to a notification issued by the Finance Division late Monday, the price of high-speed diesel (HSD) has also been increased by Rs8.14 per litre to Rs290.38 per litre.

## ATC extends interim bail of IK in 3 cases

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Monday extended the interim bail of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder in three cases related to May 9 violence, until April 16. The court directed jail authorities to ensure the attendance of the PTI founder through video link at the next hearing, besides seeking arguments from parties.

ATC Judge Arshad Javed conducted the proceedings on the bail petitions of the PTI founder in cases of attacks on Jinnah House, Askari Tower, and the torching of Shadman Police station.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi talking to media persons in Lahore

## China ready to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): China has stressed for implementing a holistic approach to national security in building the Pak-China community with shared future. In an article, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Ambassador Jiang Zaidong said China stands ready to work hand-in-hand with Pakistan to defeat the evil attempt at disrupting our cooperation. He said we are also ready to work with Pakistan to safeguard development

with security and to promote security with development.

The Ambassador said we should take the promotion of international security as a support, and further enhance China-Pakistan counter-terrorism and security cooperation. Quoting the President Xi Jinping's vision of Global Security Initiative, he stressed that all countries need to work together in addressing various security challenges for win-win results.

## PTI demands formation of independent commission to probe May 9 incidents

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) General Secretary Omar Ayub has demanded an independent commission for a fair investigation of the May 9 incident.

Speaking to media in Islamabad, Ayub asserted that the cases against the PTI founder and other leaders including Shah Mahmood Qureshi were baseless.

He claimed that the prosecution was avoiding

the Nikkah during Iddat case by postponing the case hearing twice today, as the case was bogus.

The opposition leader said he had been demanding formation of an independent commission for investigation and the release of CCTV footage of the May 9 riots incident.

He said the cipher case was bogus and the government must acknowledge its retaliation against the PTI founder.



## Pakistan, New Zealand series likely to be affected by rain

RAWALPINDI (INP): The five-match T20I series between Pakistan and New Zealand is likely to be affected by rain.

The city is likely to witness thunderstorms and rainfall tomorrow, with the downpour expected to continue throughout the week, weather forecasts suggest. The

remaining two matches of the series are scheduled to be played in Lahore.

Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted "rain-windstorm/thunderstorm with an isolated hailstorm" in various areas across Pakistan including

KP, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir, Islamabad, Punjab, Balochistan and upper/southwest Sindh on

April 18. Meanwhile, on April 20, the Met Office forecasted rain in KP, the federal capital, Punjab, northeast Balochistan, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

It must be noted that the New Zealand team has already arrived in Islamabad for an exciting five-match T20I series against Pakistan. Pakistan vs New Zealand T20I series:

18 April: 1st T20I, Rawalpindi (7pm Pakistan Standard Time), 20 April: 2nd T20I, Rawalpindi (7pm PST), 21 April: 3rd T20I, Rawalpindi (7pm PST), 25 April: 4th T20I, Lahore (7pm PST), 27 April: 5th T20I, Lahore (7pm PST)

Pakistan squad: Babar Azam ©,

Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Saim Ayub, Usman Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan (wk), Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Amir, Abbas Afridi, Abrar Ahmed, Fakhar Zaman, Irfan Khan Niazi, Usama Mir, Zaman Khan

Reserves: Haseebullah, Mohammad Ali, Agha Salman, Sahibzada Farhan, Mohammad Wasim Jr

New Zealand squad: Michael Bracewell ©,

Tom Blundell, Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, Cole McConehie, Zak Foulkes, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert (WK), Ish Sodhi



QUETTA: Workers of Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) are busy in cleaning and draining the stagnant rainwater after heavy downpour under the supervision of Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat, Commissioner Quetta and Administrator Quetta at Zarghoon road

## SCO countries art exhibition of children and young artists launched in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation Commission of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), together with the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the SCO Secretariat is organizing the SCO Countries Art Exhibition.

Pakistani Children and Young Artists are invited to submit their paintings and artworks, said a press release issued here on Monday.

Themed with "The SCO Family in My Eyes", the artworks are supposed to embody the "Shanghai Spirit", telling the fantastic SCO story from the perspective of civilization mutual learning, green development and scientific and tech-

nological innovation to embrace a better future of SCO. Pakistani Children aged between 5 to 16 years old and Children from SCO countries are invited to participate in the event. The event is open and deadline for submissions is till June 1, 2024.

For relevant detailed information on the event regarding regulations for art work submission, contact details, and other information, please follow the Facebook page of China Cultural Center in Pakistan, facebook account of the Cultural Office of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan as well as the X (former Twitter) account of Cultural Counsellor and Director of China Cultural Center in Pakistan.

## 'It's a joy': Rafael Nadal returns to action in Barcelona

LONDON (INP): Rafael Nadal said it will be "a joy" to return to action for the first time since January when he takes part in the Barcelona Open next week where he is a 12-time champion.

The 22-time Grand Slam winner has played just once, in an exhibition match, since he felt a hip injury flare-up during a quarter-final defeat by Jordan Thompson in Brisbane on the eve of the Australian Open. "I'm happy to be here, of course, Barcelona is a place that has brought me a great deal of joy, and where I have spent periods of my life," said Nadal at Saturday's draw ceremony.

Nadal will play 63rd-ranked Flavio Cobolli of Italy in his opening match. Nadal, who turns 38 in June, will be looking for a problem-free return as he builds towards seeking a record-extending 15th French Open title.

The former world number one has seen his ranking slip to 646 after missing all of the 2023 season following the Australian Open. "Over the last two years I've had very few days on tour, so spending days here, seeing people, being able to practise with players is a joy," added Nadal. "I'm keen to carry on. The tournament has some incredible players." The 2022 and 2023 Barcelona champion Carlos Alcaraz will begin his clay-court campaign

after missing the Monte Carlo Masters due to a right arm injury. World number three Alcaraz is the top seed and has a bye in the first round before facing either China's Zhang Zhizhen or Luca Van Assche of France.

Nadal has never played Cobolli, 16 years his junior. If he gets past him, he will face the tougher task of 11th-ranked Australian Alex de Minaur in the second round.



KARACHI: West Indies Women cricket players warm up during a team practice ahead of series of ODIs and T20 matches, between Pakistan and West Indies team at the National Bank Stadium in Provincial Capital



QUETTA: Vice Chancellor Khuzdar University Dr. Maqsood Ahmed meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

## NA session prorogued amid lack of quorum

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, prorogued the session of the National Assembly sine die on Monday due to a lack of quorum.

As the House proceedings commenced with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, followed by Na'at and the national anthem, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, the newly elected member of the National Assembly and daughter of the late former prime minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, took oath as an MNA. The House offered Fateha for those who died in various incidents, including acts of terrorism and the recent rains in the country. Maulana Abdul Ghafoor

Haideri led the Fateha. Senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Syed Naveed Qamar, expressed disappointment over the fact that newly elected member Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was not allowed to speak in the House by members of the opposition.

Member of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Syed Agha Rafiullah, pointed out the lack of quorum. Following this, the Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq asked for member count and subsequently prorogued the session sine die upon finding that the House was not in order. The session of National Assembly was summoned at the requisition of the opposition parties.

## KP opposition parties fight for minorities reserved seat

PESHAWAR (INP): Two opposition parties of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly fighting for a reserved seat for minorities in the legislature.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has challenged the decision of awarding a reserved seat for minorities in provincial legislature to the JUI in the Peshawar High Court. It has been petitioned in the high court that the JUI and the PML-N have equal number of 7 general seats

in the house. "In case of equal

number of seats of two parties the minorities special seats given to the party that wins toss", petitioner said.

"The election commission has allotted the reserved seat to the JUI without conducting toss to decide the matter". Petitioner has requested to the court to declare the election commission's decision as void seeking toss for decision over the minorities reserved seat.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Saad Bin Asad inspecting the affected areas after heavy downpour

## PM directs for vital measures... Seven districts...

Continued from page 1 power project and the prime minister directed for expediting work on the foreign investment in this regard.

The prime minister also asked for proposals for better utilization of the current surplus power generation capacity in industries.

He observed that wheeling price of electricity should be reduced for the industrial consumers so that power supply at reduced price could be made possible, besides for the industrial development and increase in export, grid stations should be installed near big industries.

The process of auction of those power plants of Generation Companies (GENCOs) that were lying dysfunctional and defective should be accelerated, he further directed.

The prime minister said that the government was taking all measures to reduce price of power per unit for the common man whereas to reduce circular debt, reforms in the power sector were being carried out on priority basis.

The meeting was briefed over the existing power generation capability, supply system, government's steps and proposals. It was also apprised of the future power demand and supply.

The meeting was told that by shifting the coal-run plants from the imported fuel would not only save the precious reserves but also would make it possible to reduce power price by Rs 2 per unit for

the consumers.

The prime minister directed for swift implementation of all the measures within the stipulated time frame.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday, emphasizing the improvement of power transmission network, directed the Ministry of Energy to maximize the utilization of renewable energy resources to reduce the country's oil import bill by billions of dollars.

"Ultimately, we have to move to renewable energy. The oil import worth billions of dollars can be controlled by using alternative resources like solar, wind and hydel. Make cold calculations and I believe, you will be the winner in long term," he remarked addressing a meeting, he chaired to review the power sector's performance.

The prime minister said utilizing renewable energy resources would also ensure riddance from the crude oil tanker mafia acting as parasites and eating up the national funds.

He pointed out that the country currently imports oil worth \$27 billion to meet its power and transportation requirements, and the figure could be significantly reduced by transitioning to alternative energy sources.

Discussing the ongoing drive against power theft, he lauded the performance of the Punjab government and expressed the hope that the other provinces would also follow the suit to overcome the challenge.

## Sharjeel Memon says People's bus service to commence for people of Mirpurkhas from April 20

VISION OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY LEADERSHIP AND THE SINDH GOVERNMENT IS TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE AND COMFORTABLE BUS SERVICES THROUGHOUT SINDH

Independent Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, while delivering good news to the people, announced the commencement of the People's Bus Service in Mirpurkhas and the addition of two new routes to the Pink Bus Service starting from April 19.

A meeting was convened in Karachi under the chairmanship of Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Mass Transit, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon. Secretary of Transport, Asad Zamin, and Sindh Mass Transit Authority MD Kamal Dayo were in attendance. During the meeting, it was decided to add ten new buses to the pink bus service.

Speaking on the occasion of the meeting, Senior Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon announced that the new routes of the pink bus service would be inaugurated on April 19. Additionally, the People's bus service would commence for the

people of Mirpurkhas from April 20, while a cashless automated Fare Collection Smart Card system would be launched from April 25.

He emphasized that the vision of the People's Party leadership and the Sindh government is to provide affordable and comfortable bus services throughout Sindh. A robust transport network will not only create new employment opportunities but also promote economic activities in the region.

Senior Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that the launch of the People's Bus Service across Sindh will bring revolutionary relief to the people. Additionally, he highlighted that establishing the best transport network will also attract trade and investment to the province. He directed that the transport projects should be completed soon so that the people can obtain relief. In the meeting, various transport projects, including the Red Line BRT, Green Line, and Yellow Line, were also discussed in detail.



SUKKUR: Peoples Party (PPP) Senior Leader, Khurshheed Shah talking to media persons after case hearing of alleged assets beyond means, outside Accountability Court

## Govt. enforces rain & urban flood...

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In the meeting, Principal Secretary to the CM Imran Zarkoon and DG PDMA briefed the participants on the overall situation occurred due to heavy rain in the province.

Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti expressed anger over public complaints of lack of drainage and reaffirmed to provide the required resources and support to all the field officers to take timely and precautionary measures in order to deal

with any emergency situation in the rain-affected areas of the province.

The CM said it is our responsibility to get the people out of trouble and suffering.

Sarfraz Bugti has instructed that the field officers to eliminate the encroachment on the drainage canals.

He directed the field officers and district administration officials to visit the affected areas and provide all-possible help to the affectees.

## All evidence pointing towards Indian...

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soil. APP adds: Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi said on Monday that steps were being taken to increase counters at the Lahore Airport so that time taking immigration process could be made easier for people.

Addressing a press conference at the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) regional office here, he said that he had also talked to Federal Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif in this regard, adding that electronic gates would be introduced so that passport scanning process could be done without immigration officer.

Regarding over billing of electricity bills, Mohsin Naqvi said that he had talked to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in this regard and he had assured that no pressure in this regard would be tolerated and extend full support to FIA to overcome this issue.

He said, "We have an evidence that 830 million units had been over billed in the LESCO and FIA Lahore has done good job in this regard." He said this over billing was done in government offices, industry and even to a common man who consumed only 300 units.

He said that XEN had been arrested who used to over bill consumers using 300 units, adding that it was very unfortunate.

The federal minister said that campaign against over billing would continue till this practice come to an end and steps against over billing would be taken across the country.

He said that as far as cyber side was concerned huge revamping would be carried out in FIA on cyber

side. Recruitment process on vacant posts in FIA would be completed, he added.

He said that work against power theft was being carried out on a massive scale but still a lot more had to be done in this regard.

The interior minister said that steps to overcome power theft in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be taken with the support of the Ministry of Power.

About human trafficking, Mohsin Naqvi said that a lot of work was being carried out to stop it but more efforts were required in this regard.

To a question, he said that there would be no political pressure in FIA.

He said that there would no leniency with regard to over billing issue and action would be taken without any discrimination.

He said that Karachi police and Sindh Police were working aggressively against street crimes in Karachi.

He said that there should be laws which could help to stop improper use of social media.

Earlier, Mohsin Naqvi got the Shaheed Shahzad Younas Investigation block inaugurated from Sub Inspector Faiza Shahzad, the widow of Shaheed Shahzad.

The interior minister paid tribute to Shaheed Inspector Shahzad Younas.

The federal minister also visited different sections of the newly inaugurated investigation block. Federal Investigation Agency Director General Ahmad Ishaque Jehangir, FIA Lahore Director Sarfraz Virk and others were also present.



## Ahsan stresses to transform sports, tourism scenarios

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ahsan Iqbal on Monday underscored the need to transform country's sports and tourism scenarios to project its true image globally.

Ahsan, who is also Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives was given additional charge of IPC ministry recently.

"I am honoured that the prime minister has entrusted me with this responsibility," he said while talking to media after chairing his first meeting as IPC minister here at Pakistan Sports Board.

He emphasized the significance of the IPC ministry in the field of sports.

"The 18th Amendment does not mean that the federation should neglect the coordination," he said.

Highlighting the importance of national coordination for the development of the country's potential in tourism and sports, he said,

"The establishment of a National Tourism Council is necessary.

Similarly, we will have to make concerted effort to revive the country's sports reputation," he added.

The minister also spoke about Pakistan's performance at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, last year wherein it only claimed three medals.

"Today, Pakistan's name is not prominent in

the Asian Games as it used to be in the past.

"We will have to take some serious steps for sports development.

We will have to declare 2025 as the year of sports revival," he asserted.

He highlighted the significant investments made by other countries for hosting prestigious sport events to get recognition and promote themselves.

"We need to launch the National Internship Programme on a large scale this year," he added.

He also mentioned Pakistan's dairy industry, pointing out the low export numbers compared to other countries. He stressed the need for Pakistan to explore new markets for its meat products.



President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with the Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, in Islamabad

## HEC asks young digital artists to showcase their skills in ECO Youth Award

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has asked young digital artist with a knack for rich cultural themes to showcase their talent in digital art for a chance to win the ECO Youth Award with a \$1000 cash prize.

According to the details, the ECO Youth Award Celebrating Young Talent in the ECO Region called all young digital artists to submit their entries for the award, celebrating the best in digital art and graphic design from the vibrant

ECO member states.

Their designs should be original, creative, and effectively communicate a message; and contribute to the culture and heritage of the ECO region, reflecting its diverse and rich traditions.

The Deadline to apply for the award is May 15, 2024.

It is worth mentioning here that there is a need for the expansion of relations among the peoples in the ECO region, along with the significant role of youth as a major driving force for the

ECO countries' development, which has increased the importance of planning to maximize their optimal participation in the activities implemented by the ECO Cultural Institute. The ECO Youth Award initiative has been developed to support the plan above.

As per the scope of the proposal, the ECOCI Youth Award initiative has been proposed with the aim to discover young talents and to pave the way to further popularize the ECO Cultural Institute.

## Govt disburses Rs 66,037m for various water sector schemes so far

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released an amount of Rs 66,037 million for various water resources schemes so far under the annual Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

According to the official data issued by the Planning Commission, the government had specified a sum of Rs 110,500 million for various projects in PSDP 2023-24. Out of the total release amount, the local component stood at Rs 90,367.54 million, while the foreign aid component was Rs 20,132.46 billion. A sum of Rs 30,454.74 million has been spent on various water-related projects so far. For ongoing schemes, an amount of Rs 20,000 million has been allocated for Damer Basha Dam Project (dam part), Rs 15,500 million for K-4 Greater Water Supply Scheme (Karachi), Rs 10,500 million for the Mohmand dam, Rs 5,000 million for Diamer Basha Dam Project (Land Acquisition and Resettlement), Rs 3,273.834 million for

construction of Basool Dam, Rs 1000 million for construction of 100 delay action dams in Balochistan, Rs 3000 million for construction of Awaran dam, Rs 1500 million for construction of Gish Kaur Storage Dam, Rs 2500 million for construction of Panjgur Storage dam, Rs 2000 million for construction of Winder dam (Lasbela), Rs 1244.741 million for construction of 6 small dams (Zhob and Sherani districts), Rs 1000 million for increasing storage capacity and improvement in command areas of Tanda dam Kohat, Rs 1000 million each for Kurram Tangi dam, normal/emergent flood programme and Rs 770 million for Mangi dam.

Under the new scheme, Rs 10,000 million was allocated for Umbrella PC-1 of the Flood Protection Sector Project, Rs 1000 million each for the remodeling of Pat Feeder Canal, Kachhi Canal Project, construction of Sumari Payan dam project (Kohat), and Rs 385.736 million for the construction of Asreli Storage Dam Sui in the PSDP for FY 2023-24.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Constitution Avenue during rain in the Federal Capital.

## ICT admin tightened surveillance to control fare hikes by transporters

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the commuters are coming back to the Federal Capital from different cities of the country, the district administration has ramped up monitoring efforts across various bus stands in the city to deter any attempts at exploiting passengers during this busy period.

According to the Spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabassum, all Assistant Commissioners were present at Faizabad, 26 Number, Karachi Company and other bus stands and actively monitored the transportation process to curb the fare hikes.

In a recent operation, Assistant Commissioner Uzair Ali Khan wielded swift action, imposing a hefty fine of Rs 5,000 on a vehicle found overcharging

at Karachi Company Bus Stand. This decisive move underscored the administration's commitment to ensuring fair pricing for commuters, Dr Abdullah said.

At the Faizabad bus terminal, Assistant Commissioner Farwah Batool spearheaded an inspection, uncovering a breach of regulations. An individual was apprehended for violating the fixed fares by the government. Such proactive measures demonstrate a zero-tolerance stance against violations, the spokesperson said.

He said that on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the constant presence of assistant commissioners and magistrates at all bus stands.

## Registered voters in Pakistan surge to 130 million

ISLAMABAD (APP): The total number of registered voters in the country has surged to 130.136 million from 128.59 million on the eve of February 8 general elections.

According to the latest data released by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the registered voters as on date are 130.136 million, with 70.043 million males and 60.092 million females, reflecting an increase of 1.546 million voters since the February 8 elections.

Islamabad has a total of 1.094 million voters, including 0.52 million females and 0.574 million males.

Similarly, there are voters 5.44 million, including 2.389 million females and 3.051 million males in Balochistan; 22.183 million, including 12.074 million males and 10.109 million females in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 74.093 million, including 39.563 million males and 34.530 million females in Punjab; and 27.326 million voters, including 14.781 million males and 12.545 million females in Sindh.

## Farewell ceremony held in honor of Inspector Muhammad Aslam

ISLAMABAD: A farewell ceremony was held in honor of Inspector Muhammad Aslam at Safe City Islamabad, a public rela-

tion officer said. He asked the serving police officials to do their best to earn respect for the department. He was of the view that public servants



can earn a good name by serving the citizens with devotion and dedication.

He further said that the contribution of Inspector Muhammad Aslam to the Islamabad Capital Police would be remembered. At the end, he presented a bouquet to the retired officer and also expressed his best wishes for his future endeavors.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ahsan Iqbal was briefed by Secretary, IPC Nadeem Irshad Kayani regarding the Ministry's role, progress and key initiatives.

## Capital embraces normalcy after natives return

ISLAMABAD (APP): The capital city has embraced normalcy, with the majority of natives returning after celebrating the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr in their inbred towns with relatives to join their daily engagements.

After celebrations of Eid-ul-Fitr, following the conclusion of the holy month of Ramzan, the natives as well as the locals are now transitioning back to their routines, as significant attendance was observed in the public and private offices and educational institutions.

Although many of the employees and students have resumed their official and academic engagements, respectively, many still couldn't join their daily activities due to tiredness after traveling back from their inbred towns. The majority of the population of Islamabad, comprised of people belonging to different parts of the country who are settled here for job, education, or business purposes, prefers to celebrate the festivals of Eid with

their relatives in their home towns. The three Eid holidays from Wednesday to Friday announced by the government compelled the officials to take leave of Monday and Tuesday to club weekends back and forth with Eid holidays to spend more time with their families. Kamran Khan, a resident of G-8/1, said, "Most of the natives prefer to celebrate the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr in their home towns. Now, the hustle and bustle of the city is reviving after Eid, with its residents coming back from their native towns."

"I managed to get leave of Monday and Tuesday prior to Eid holidays and left for my hometown on Friday, enjoying around ten days with my parents, making this Eid memorable as I would get an opportunity to visit them on Eid," he said while talking to APP.

Muhammad Yar, who is settled in Islamabad due to a government job and only visits his native town occasionally, said, "It is important to bring children to our home town to spend

maximum time with all family members to have a strong bond."

"I wish my children to remain connected with our roots, native language, traditions, and culture so that they can adopt those deep-rooted values that are essential to becoming good humans," he said.

The federal capital wears a deserted look during the Eid festivals as most of the natives move to their home towns to celebrate such festive occasions with their loved ones, while most of the markets and restaurants also remain closed.

The educational institutions in the city have also opened after Eid vacations, and students, after enjoying detailed visits to their home towns, are ready to focus on their academic routine along with sharing details of their Eid celebrations and participating in Eid Milan parties.

"I was excited on the first day of school today after vacations as me and my friends shared stories of our Eid celebrations and had great fun.

## PMD forecast more rains-wind, thunderstorm during this week with occasional gaps

ISLAMABAD (APP): After culmination of the ongoing rain spell on April 15, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast more rain-wind/thunderstorm at various parts of the country during the current week with occasional gaps.

Another strong westerly wave was likely to enter western parts of the country on April 16 (night) and likely to grip most parts of Balochistan on April 17 and will extend to upper parts on April 18.

Under the influence of this weather system, rain-wind/thunderstorm with few heavy, with isolated

very heavy falls) is expected in Balochistan including Gwadar, Kech, Awaran, Chagi, Kharan, Awaran, Lasbella, Khuzdar, Kalat, Noushki, Mastung, Jhal Magsi, Naseerabad, Sibbi, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Barkhan, Loralai, Harnai, Qilla Saifullah, Mastung, Ziarat, Shirani, Zhob, Musa Khel and Barkhan from April 16 (night) to April 19 (morning).

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rain-wind/thunderstorm accompanied by few heavy, with isolated very heavy falls with snowfall over high mountains is expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat.



ISLAMABAD: Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party of Dubai Matloob Shah presenting sweet to Member National Assembly of PPP Natasha Doltana during a ceremony in honour of newly elected unopposed Member National Assembly Asifa Bhutto Zardari, at NPC.

## NH&MP takes stern action against overcharging on Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the directions of Inspector General, National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) Salman Chaudhry, the officers took stern action against the complaints of overcharging by the transporters during Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to press release, NH&MP returned more than Rs 3,900,000 to passengers of public service vehicles that were overcharged during Eid days. Additionally, 6,935 public service vehicles were fined on overcharging and over-

loading. More than Rs 11 million fined was imposed against these violations.

Furthermore, NHMP ensured the safe and comfortable travel of commuters on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Timely and quick action of Motorway Police was highly appreciated.

Inspector General Salman Chaudhry reiterated that the safety of passengers travelling on National Highways across Pakistan's remains NHMP's prime responsibility.

## Amjad Bobby remembered on 19th death anniversary for timeless contributions to music

MULTAN (APP): In the heart of Pakistan's lively music scene, Amjad Bobby remains the king of music, even 19 years after his passing.

As the music world commemorates his 19th death anniversary on April 15, it's not just a day to mourn the loss of a maestro rather it is a day to celebrate the timeless melodies and soul-stirring compositions that Bobby gifted to the world.

Born in Amritsar India, on March 20, 1944, Amjad Bobby's journey into the realm of music was destined to be extraordi-

nary. His early years were steeped in the rich cultural tapestry of Pakistan, where music wasn't just a form of entertainment but a way of life. Bobby's innate talent for music became apparent at a young age, and he embarked on a journey to hone his craft.

As Bobby's reputation as a talented musician grew, so did his opportunities.

He made his mark in the Pakistani film industry, where he composed music for numerous films, enchanting audiences with his melodious tunes and poignant lyrics.

## PIEDRR 2024 to be rescheduled amid unavoidable circumstances

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday announced that the first ever Pakistan's International Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PIEDRR-2024) has been rescheduled due to unavoidable circumstances and administrative instructions.

In a post on the social networking and microblogging website X erstwhile Twitter, the NDMA wrote on its official handle, "It is to inform that due to unavoidable circumstances & administrative instructions, the PIEDRR Pakistan's 1st International Expo on DRR - 2024 (planned from 23 to 25 April 2024) at Islamabad, Pakistan has been rescheduled."

## Independent candidates challenge election results from Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three independent candidates have challenged the results of general elections held in Islamabad's three constituencies on February 8. Amir Mughal from NA-46 Islamabad, Shoaib Shaheen from NA-47, and Ali Bukhari from NA-48, in their petitions before the election tribunal, pleaded for revocation of the victory notification of all the winning candidates.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Constitution Avenue decorated with Saudi Arabia and Pakistani banners in the Federal Capital, in connection with Saudi delegation, led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan will visit in Pakistan.



# Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Tuesday April 16, 2024

## Iran's counterstrike

The Middle East, indeed, the entire international community, was on tenterhooks after Israel struck the consular section of Iran's embassy in Damascus on April 1.

While Tel Aviv has been striking Iranians and their allies in Syria for over a decade, since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, this incident was different, and was seen by Tehran as a declaration of war.

It was the first time Israel hit an official Iranian facility, killing several members of the Sepah-i-Pasdar, including two senior generals. Tehran's response to this provocation was expected, and it came late on Saturday, in another 'first', as the Islamic Republic rained a barrage of drones and missiles directly on Israel.

From here, it is into the unknown: either diplomacy and de-escalation can kick in and bring the region, and the world, back from the brink. Or a catastrophic conflagration can ensue, resulting in more devastation, bloodshed and global economic misery.

Israel's Western friends — particular the US and many European states — have used sanctimonious adjectives to denounce Tehran's 'reckless' counterstrike, and have reiterated their 'ironclad' commitment to Israel's defence.

The rest of the international community, including UN Security Council members China and Russia, have taken a more measured approach, emphasising de-escalation. Pakistan has also highlighted the need to "stabilise the situation and restore peace". The fact is that Israel, by attacking Iran's diplomatic facilities and violating Syrian airspace, is largely responsible for this dangerous situation. And its recklessness must be reined in.

There was, of course, tremendous domestic pressure on the Iranian government to retaliate, and Tehran appears to have taken the pragmatic route by demonstrating its deterrence capability, while stepping back from all-out war. Iranian officials have said the matter is "concluded", though top generals say if Israel responds, Iran will again hit back.

This is a very dangerous moment for the international community. Instead of mollycoddling Israel, the Western bloc needs to prevent it from taking more provocative steps. If Tel Aviv does take further military action against Iran, then all bets are off, and a full-scale war could be inevitable. The path towards de-escalation is clear. Israel must immediately end the slaughter in Gaza, which is the key driver of the current confrontation in the Middle East.

Moreover, it must cease its roguish acts of targeting sovereign states including Iran, Lebanon and Syria. If the West keeps talking tough, it will embolden Israel and could drag the US and Europe into a shooting war with Iran and its regional allies. This is what Benjamin Netanyahu may actually want, to take the world's attention away from the massacre in Gaza, and to fight Iran to the last American. Deft statesmanship is the need of the hour to prevent a devastating showdown.

Maleeha Lodhi

The global debate over governance continues — what constitutes good governance and how it helps to determine the fate and fortunes of nations.

It is axiomatic that effective governance and competent leadership are what make the difference between successful and unsuccessful states. Economic development, in fact, depends on good governance. And this, in turn, has much to do with the quality of governance institutions, their responsiveness to public needs and people's faith in them.

In an increasingly complex world, governance challenges have become more daunting. New technologies have created unprecedented flows of instant information to heighten the challenge. Technology has empowered citizens and increased their expectations of what governments should deliver. But governments are seen to lack agility in a fast-moving world.

The international debate on governance in the 21st century has produced

a rich body of literature. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this conversation intensified as assessments were made of which countries managed the health crisis better and whether democracies did a more efficient job than authoritarian systems. Fareed Zakaria, in his book *Ten Lessons for the Post-Pandemic World*, argued that while democracies had a better record, it was a "competent, well-functioning, trusted state" and quality of governance that were instrumental in tackling the pandemic effectively.

Similarly, the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama asserted it was not the type of political system that determined capable management but an effective state. In a 2020 essay, he argued the crucial determinant in efficient crisis response is state capacity and trust in government. "What matters in the end is not regime type but whether citizens trust their leaders, and whether those leaders preside over a competent and effective state."

The unsettled post-Covid period saw unprecedented, overlapping chal-

lenges confront countries across the world. This prompted the World Bank to call for reimagining governance. Its *Future of Governance* report (2022) focused attention on the need for governments to tackle unresolved governance problems.

It saw the world at an inflection point due to growing demands, economic headwinds and mistrust, as well as persistence of chronic failures such as the learning crisis and job insecurity. The report called for a new social contract supported by an elite bargain by which elites committed to outcomes to benefit society at large and not just themselves. It proposed a "government of the future" with a clear vision of its role — innovative, trusted, prepared for crisis and responsive to the demands of citizens.

Over the years, the World Bank also advanced the governance debate by its efforts to evaluate and measure the quality of governance of countries. Its worldwide governance indicators represent a compilation of data that captures perceptions of the quality of governance in over 200

countries and territories. They measure six dimensions of governance — voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

In the global rankings based on assessment of these dimensions, Singapore, Finland, Norway and Denmark were among top performers in the 2022 rankings, with Pakistan among the bottom group of countries.

A different contribution to the governance debate was made by an insightful book published some years back titled *Intelligent Governance for the 21st Century: A Middle Way between West and East* by Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels. The authors examined whether there was a need to reimagine government as political systems were not delivering effective governance. They offered a compelling idea that both East and West should learn and adapt from one another to combine "knowledgeable democracy" with "accountable meritocracy".

For the authors, the question was not if Western-style democracy would triumph over rule by a meritocratic Mandarinate rooted in China's ancient "institutional civilisation", or the other way around. Instead, they asked whether a "middle way" between them could be evolved.

By this, they meant finding a balance between meritocracy and democracy, and between authority and freedom to create the most "intelligent form of governance".

They suggested drawing on the 'best practices' from both to evolve hybrid institutional arrangements that fused elements of popular democracy with the Confucian tradition of a learned meritocracy.

But they stressed the need for reform in Western and Eastern political systems alike, as both faced challenges. They argued that polarisation, dysfunction, decay and ideological rigidity afflict governance systems in much of the West. Without reform, electoral democracy anchored in a consumer culture of instant gratification is headed

towards "terminal decline". This is because it prioritises short-term interests, unmitigated by robust deliberative institutions, which have become weaker and unable to pursue the public good. In the US, democracy appears unable to self-correct.

On the other hand, China adopts a long-term governance perspective, can take tough decisions, and robustly implement them. China's operative system is predicated on the meritocratic tradition of learned and experienced elites and reflected in the modern Mandarinate of the Communist Party. This enables it to chart a long-term path, which explains its extraordinary rise. But the Chinese system is also under stress and needs correction because it "lacks accountability" and faces mounting demands from its people for democratic checks on arbitrary authority and cronyism.

This discussion leads the authors to contend that the best attributes of both Eastern and Western systems can help to produce a template of "intelligent governance".

## After neoliberalism

Umair Javed

Slowly but surely, the signs of a global political and cultural realignment are becoming apparent. Several commentators trace the origins of this realignment to events of the last two and a half decades — the so-called war on terror and its impact on Muslim societies, the global financial crisis and the concurrent growth in Asian economies, and greater migratory flows, especially to the West.

A number of these varied trends are clubbed together and summarised as the end of neoliberal globalisation. Trade wars between the US and China, the fracturing of peace in Europe, the rise of right-wing nationalist and populist movements, the breakdown of the (admittedly) thin consensus on open borders, and the resurgence of the state as a coordinator of economic activity all show a world quite different to the one envisioned by the Davos crowd in the 1980s and 1990s.

On the economy front, quite a lot has already been written about the decoupling of trade and

the rise of state interventions in the economy, even in the West. Drawing on China's successful implementation of political capitalism — ie, a system where political power of the state is used to fulfil economic goals — even countries generally reluctant to embrace any form of state intervention (such as the US), have switched to some variant of industrial policy, especially in key sectors like battery and green technology and semiconductors. In her recent trip to China, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen suggested, almost ruefully, that the (neoliberal) mantra of free trade championed by her and her predecessors in office had been detrimental to American workers.

These economic shifts will become more apparent as countries across the Global South attempt to catch up using a variety of different interventionist approaches. Selective engagement with the world, rather than an unencumbered embrace, is likely to be the pattern in the years ahead.

However, neoliberal globalisation was not just an economic project. It

came armed with a range of political and cultural ideals whose task was to generate mass consensus, especially among the so-called losers of globalisation.

A primary one was the ideal of liberal democracy, supposedly guaranteed globally by the US. The simple fact, though, is that the commitment to this ideal remained selective at best, contingent on US foreign policy goals. The West was comfortable working with dictatorships of all stripes as long as its interests in a particular region were guaranteed. However, even this superficial consensus seems to be fraying. With the rise of far-right and populist movements in the West, democracy is eroding in its supposed heartlands.

Simultaneously, the (selective) success of autocracies in generating popular support and consensus through economic growth makes them seem an attractive alternative. Regardless of the extremely specific factors that allow some autocracies to generate growth, every aspiring autocrat, such as those frequently found in Pakistan, seems to think that limit-

ing popular representation is a key ingredient in delivering growth.

In an insightful recent exposition, sociologist Cihan Tugal cites the case of Erdogan and Turkey's AKP, which have deftly used targeted state welfare, interventions in the economy and authoritarian politics to create a durable ruling arrangement. These arrangements have proven to be somewhat successful in limiting, though by no means finishing, challenges to its rule over the last two decades.

Finally, the cultural agenda of neoliberalism is also being challenged, both in the West and abroad. This agenda was based on the extremely selective co-optation of ideals of inclusion and representation. It found its clearest manifestation in places like the US, where check-box tokenism became the basic mode of dealing with racial and gender minorities without any actual accompanying reordering of economic and social hierarchies.

The slowdown of economic growth, especially in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, has led to an upsurge of racial, nativist, and chauvinist

politics, which sees even these watered-down efforts of social justice to be an affront that need to be done away with. In a throwback of sorts to the inter-war period of the 20th century, minorities and immigrants are being scapegoated for the unmet aspirations of the majority.

This retreat towards primordial loyalties is also increasingly apparent in migrant communities, especially conservative Muslim ones across the world. The genocidal acts of Israel in Gaza, and the blatant encouragement provided by Western governments, have created a major schism with Muslim communities and dealt another blow to liberal political rhetoric and its talk of multicultural societies. Anecdotally, conversations with Pakistani migrants in the West reveal a range of anxieties; not just with regard to the rise of racial and Islamophobic politics, but also with prevalent modes of gender and sexual politics that are seen to be antithetical to conservative belief systems. This is particularly true for young, first-generation migrants who are raising families in the West.

One outcome of this

is an even further rise in the attractiveness of the Gulf monarchies, especially for high-skilled, high-credentialed Muslim migrants. There is now renewed appeal of greater cultural conformity, alongside the usual economic advantages associated with life abroad. Global transformations rarely reveal themselves in one, clearly distilled moment. Instead, they become apparent through various, drawn-out and slow-moving processes. In the present, these shifts in the global economy, political systems, and cultural values are all important indicators of such a transformation. Some of these shifts may be read as broadly positive. A focus on state-led national economic growth is one such example, which may help fix the inequities created by neoliberalism.

On the other hand, ethnic, cultural and racial insularity, and the ongoing retreat towards such identities can be seen as a more worrying trend. As seen in the past, the biggest fallout of heightened nationalism is usually further exclusion and discrimination of gender and racial/ethnic minorities.

## Childcare challenge

Huma Yusuf

During a spell of what feels like endless school holidays, a working mother's mind inevitably turns to childcare. When faced with the great juggling act that is work and life, it is not surprising that the West is grappling with declining birthrates and millennials are taking to TikTok in droves to swear off having children. Readers may dismiss working mothers and childcare as a Western problem, but it is increasingly a Pakistani one. The country must tackle it quickly if it is to be an equitable, inclusive and prosperous society.

Admittedly, there has been good news on the childcare front. In her inaugural speech as Punjab Chief Minister, Maryam Nawaz pledged to develop day care centres in workplaces to enable working women. This comes on the back of a spree of day care centre launches in Punjab in recent years, including at police stations. Last year, the then president signed the Day Care Centres Bill, which requires workplaces in Islamabad with more than 70 employees to establish crèches. It has also made news headlines each time a provincial assembly has established a childcare facility, setting a positive precedent.

But these largely symbolic acts amount to little in a country with a female population of 109 million (2021). At 24 per cent, Pakistan's female labour participation rate is among the lowest in the world, and well off our own Vision 2025 target of 45pc. The lack of childcare is a key driver for this low participation: according to a 2019 ILO study, Pakistani women do more than 90pc of unpaid care work.

Despite this alarm-

ing statistic, the impetus to push for adequate childcare for Pakistani women seems more like lip service than a top priority. This highlights the state's short-sightedness, given that female workforce participation is constantly cited as a golden key to unlock Pakistan's economic potential. Indeed, a 2018 IMF study concluded that Pakistan could boost its GDP by 30pc if it closed the gender gap in its workforce.

There are various barriers to additional childcare provision, the key one being the failure to recognise the massive demand for such support. The nostalgic fantasy of joint families, where infants are left in the care of doting grandmothers, persists. In reality, care is provided by elder female siblings or cousins, themselves denied schooling because of childcare obligations, fuelling a vicious cycle of female poverty and marginalisation. Or it's a maid — likely underpaid and underpaid — who herself will struggle with childcare when the time comes to start a family. Improving formal childcare provision for one woman would likely improve the lot of many others. The childcare demand is set to grow exponentially. High inflation means dual-income households, particularly in urban areas, will grow in number. Some of this will hopefully also be spurred by positive pull factors, as more workplaces seek to be gender inclusive.

Pakistan is also likely at a tipping point for female rural-urban migration, and potentially at risk of having its female labour force participation decline if it cannot solve the childcare puzzle. This is because women in rural areas who participate in agricultural activities

are considered employed (leading to a rural-urban discrepancy of 28.9pc against 10.2pc in 2016).

Rural-urban migration has been dominated by men seeking employment or education in cities, with women moving in smaller numbers, largely due to marriage. But as climate change leads to more stress on agricultural production, expect women to migrate in much larger numbers due to economic necessity. With climate migration will come greater demand for childcare, particularly in urban areas, as women leave behind the proverbial village it takes to raise a child. Failure to cater to this demand will worsen the prospects of female labour participation.

The solution is not merely legislative: laws such as the 1934 Factories Act mandate childcare provision by employers after reaching a threshold of female employees. A 2021 IFC/Pakistan Business Council report found that these laws were poorly implemented because of lack of awareness and resources both among enforcement agencies and employers.

This will have to change. But solving for the supply side without addressing valid and material safeguarding concerns will be as good as doing nothing. Given the horrific stories about child abuse that make it to the news with sickening frequency (those are just the cases that are reported), childcare provision will have to be delivered with a complete infrastructure of regulation, monitoring, robust law-enforcement and timely inspections.

We cannot afford to wait. The fate of legions of working women and their children depends on our state prioritising the childcare conundrum.

## Criminalising hate

Bina Shah

There is a Stephen Spielberg movie called *Minority Report*, based on a Philip K. Dick science fiction novella set in the year 2054. Tom Cruise plays a police officer who heads a special unit that uses Pre-Cogs, people with psychic powers who can see the future and predict crimes. When Cruise is accused of a crime he is going to commit 36 hours from now, it is merely the vision of a psychic that plunges Cruise into a desperate fight to clear his name and not be killed.

I thought of this film when I read about a new law enacted in Scotland called the Hate Crime and Public Order Act. Hate crime laws had already existed in Scotland; the new law adds more categories to the group of protected minorities: age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or being intersex. It also abolishes the crime of blasphemy, which most developed nations consider to be outdated.

The hate crime law, passed in 2021, came into effect on April 1, 2024. It does not include protections for biological women. Instead, the Scottish government, led by First Minister Humza Yousaf, proposes to enact a separate law criminalising misogyny at a later date. This has caused tremendous controversy, as duelling groups argue that women's rights are being trampled in favour of transgender rights.

Confusingly, it is not meant to "stifle criticism or debate", or even to stop people from "expressing controversial, challenging, or offensive views" (quotes from a Scottish government spokesperson speaking

to CNN). On social media, people are posting controversial statements just to test its boundaries. In the law's first week, police received over 7,000 complaints, of which only 240 were officially recorded, and the rest deemed as false complaints. Described as an "unmitigated disaster", the law is causing more problems than it hoped to solve.

Hate speech laws that get it right must serve as a balance between public safety and order, and the right for people to express themselves freely — hence the classic example, that you can't go into a crowded theatre and shout "Fire!" because of the harmful consequences of that act. Most hate speech laws criminalise speech that incites people to violence and physical harm. The Scottish law takes this even further; if your speech incites hatred, not even actual violence, against a protected group, you are criminally liable.

Hate speech laws engender a debate about what we want our societies to look like, and how we want our citizens to behave versus how much freedom of thought and expression we want them to have. They also attempt to make it mandatory to treat others with respect and dignity.

But you can't truly legislate against hatred as a felt human emotion, any more than you can make it enforceable by law to love against someone's will.

We are trying to legally intervene in the delicate space between emotion, ethics, and action, by acting as a barrier to human beings racing along the signal-free corridor of the amygdala, the part of the brain that generates impulses. Your

pre-frontal cortex, which weighs the consequences of those impulses, may decide that a little hatred in the right time and the right place is actually a good thing, as Aristotle described the relationship between hatred and virtue. But just in case, the Hate Crime Law, with its attendant punishments, is there to guide you to the better choice of keeping your hateful thoughts to yourself.

In George Orwell's dystopian classic 1984, laws against thoughtcrime, or having negative thoughts against the ruling government, was the most extreme type of hate speech law. Thoughtcrimes did not have to be acted upon, nor did they have to cause physical or material harm. Merely a person's beliefs, expressed to another or written in a diary, could bring a citizen of Oceania such as Winston Smith into the reach of the ThoughtPolice, or thought police, though he avoided the ultimate fate of vaporisation.

But rather than 1984 or the *Minority Report*, I look at Pakistan as a prime example of hate speech laws gone wrong, where the mere suggestion of sacrilege results in pogroms, desecration, and death before the legal process against it has even begun.

Meanwhile, vulnerable populations — women, khwaja siras and intersex people, the disabled, non-Muslims and minority sects — continue to experience hatred, discrimination and violence freely expressed in thought, words, and action. In Pakistan, this kind of hatred is not banned; instead, it is weaponised. When will we come up with the kind of laws to protect our citizens from that?



## Govt fully focused on uplift of merged districts: KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali has said that federal and provincial governments are fully focused on the development and provision of health and education facilities in the merged districts of the province.

Talking to a delegation from Speen locality of the tribal district North Waziristan here on Monday, he said that government is taking crucial steps in this regard and results of it would be visible soon.

The delegation headed by Maulana Javed Iqbal was consisted of Irfanullah, Aslam Yar, Amir Hamza, Asghar Khan and others. The members of delegation briefed the Governor regarding problems faced by the people of the area and called for their resolution.

Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said that the development of all backward districts including merged districts is the joint responsibility of all stakeholders and they would have to play their due role in this regard.

The Governor assured the delegation that he would take up the matter

relating to problems in the tribal districts with the authorities concerned to ensure the availability of medical staff in hospitals and teachers in schools.

However, he also told the delegation to raise complaints in their respective areas in written with the departments concerned, so their problems could be resolved in short period of time.

Haji Ghulam Ali said that all elected representatives including councilors, Members of National and Provincial Assembly are responsible to monitor health and education and local problems and bring the issue of the absent doctors and students in the notice of their respective departments.

Meanwhile, a representative delegation from district Malakand headed by Sajid Khan, Farhan and Maulana Islam also called on the Governor at the Governor's House and informed the Governor about the problems and difficulties faced by the people of the area. The Governor assured the delegation of his full cooperation to solve the problems.



PESHAWAR: A representative delegation of Spain area of merged district South Waziristan led by Maulana Javed Iqbal meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali

## Maryam approves comprehensive development plan for Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved a comprehensive development plan for Murree which includes a number of projects.

The chief minister presided over a special meeting on 'Murree's problems, needs and development projects' held Monday here in Murree. The meeting was co-chaired by Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, leader Pakistan Muslim League (N).

A detailed briefing was given during the meeting highlighting prevailing issues, needs of further development and new projects for the development of the Malka-e-Kohsar. A range of schemes

of expansions, health facilities, parking issues, water supply and making the city a tourists' place came under the discussion.

During the meeting, approval of water supply scheme was accorded. According to the scheme water will be supplied to Murree from Jhelum river. Additionally, a plan was also called for the maintenance and filtration of the existing water scheme in Murree.

The chief minister directed to establish New Murree, Kotli Sattian and other areas be developed into alternative tourist destinations. A state of the art hospital will be constructed to provide best health services for the residents as

well as the tourist. The proposed site of the hospital was examined.

For the crowd management and traffic arrangements, a proposal of issuance of vehicles permit card for entry into Murree was reviewed. Banning the entry of vehicles into Murree was also considered. The chief minister directed to initiate steps for starting special cable car and modern tram services which would reduce traffic jam and will provide an ease to traveller and tourists. The chief minister also directed to demolish illegal buildings to create more parking capacity. Moreover, it was also directed during the meeting to ensure parking areas in all building premises. Final

plan for clearing encroachments was presented and approved. Anti encroachment plan will be initiated for further clearing the roads. Another important decision was taken by which bus stand will be made functional along with closure of all other illegal bus stands/stations. Approval was given to convert Murree roads as one-way. In this regard, widening of roads will also be done. The expansion of the famous Jhika Gali Chowk was also reviewed during the meeting.

Several decisions were taken for the cleanliness of Murree. The chief minister approved the construction of toilets on the pattern of the motorway.

## Azma Bukhari says: PML-N believes in ensuring prosperity

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz believes in serving the people and credit goes to the PML-N for overcoming electricity load-shedding, making the country an atomic power and starting China Pakistan Economic Corridor Project.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday she said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has brought an air ambulance project just in one and a half months.

She said that rescue workers are getting training

of an air ambulance, adding that it is a small size plane which could be landed anywhere.

Azma Bukhari said that all services of an air ambulance would be free for common man.

She further said that price of 'Roti' has been reduced after doing homework, adding that impossible word is not present in the dictionary of PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif and Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz.

She further said that Sehat card would be introduced once again after improving it.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Uzma Bukhari talking with mediamen at DGPR

## Swat poses potential in cultural, natural tourism: Charles

PESHAWAR (APP): The Ambassador of Belgium Charles Delogni visited Swat valley to explore natural beauty of hilly tourism station of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Pakistan Boys Scouts Association Chairman Sardar Waqar Shahzad welcomed the dignitary and had the distinct pleasure of extending a warm welcome to His Excellency, Ambassador Charles Delogni of Belgium, as he graced the picturesque Swat Valley with his presence, said a press release issued here on Monday.

During this memorable visit, Sardar Waqar

Shahzad and His Excellency embarked on a journey to explore the enchanting valleys of Swat, where the splendor of nature left a lasting impression.

Engaging in insightful discussions, they found common ground in the belief that the challenges faced by one nation could serve as opportunities for the other.

They envisioned a promising collaboration wherein Pakistan's dynamic youth, in pursuit of employment opportunities, could synergize with Belgium's quest for skilled labor due to its aging population.

## UAF ranked No 1 in Pakistan, 10th in Asia

FAISALABAD (APP): QS World University Ranking 2024 has declared the University of Agriculture Faisalabad as the 56th best university across the globe in the subject Agriculture and Forestry and 10th in Asia while the UAF is at the top in the country. It has jumped to ten spots this year. The UAF spokesman said on Monday that according to the last year's ranking of QS World University Ranking 2023, the UAF was ranked at 66th position in the world, and 12th in Asia.

The UAF is not only progressing in the international ranking but also excelling in solving farmers' problems and community services. The university has the distinction of having drafted a ten-year agricultural policy at the government level to address agricultural challenges while enabling prosperity and increased productivity. It has strong international collaboration under which tangible research work was being carried out.

UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan while congratulating the faculty on this success expressed hope that in the future, this institution will continue to play its pivotal role in progressing and ensuring food security.

He said the UAF was the only educational institution in the country which had been included in the top 100 universities in the world for the past decade, while it holds the honor of being the top ranked university in the country, which was a source of pride for the agricultural community and the entire country. Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization Director Prof Dr Muhammad Jafar Jaskani said that progress had been made in all parameters of international quality i.e academic reputation, employer reputation, citation research paper, H-index indicates and International Research Network.



SUKKUR: Sindh Home Minister, Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar along with Sindh Inspector General of Police (IGP), Ghulam Nabi Memon and others addresses to media persons during press conference regarding ongoing operation in the Kashmir and Kacha areas.

## DC Ghotki visits procurement center

By Tanveer Ahmed  
MIRPUR MATHELO: Deputy Commissioner Ghotki Dr. Syed Muhammad Ali visited the food department procurement center established at Mirpur Mathelo and heard the complaints of the settlers, expressed anger on the officers of the food department, opened all the procurement centers and provided bardana to the settlers as per the policy. Continued instructions.

According to the details, Deputy Commissioner Ghotki Dr. Syed Muhammad Ali Mirpur Mathelo and Hayat Pitafi reached the food procure-

ment center, where the residents complained to the Deputy Commissioner and said that they had come to the center since morning for Bardana, but they were not given Bardana. Expressing his anger, the Deputy Commissioner directed the officials of the Food Department that according to the policy of the Sindh government, the settlers coming to the centers should be provided with bardana without making them wait and start the process of purchasing wheat by opening all the centers. In this regard, laziness will not be acceptable. Speaking further on this occasion.



Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif visiting Government High School Murree amidst heavy rain

## Minister reviews Social Welfare dept's affairs

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Sohail Shaukat Butt, during a meeting here on Monday, reviewed the department's affairs.

Director General Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Amina Munir, divisional directors and officers concerned attended the meeting.

The deliberations at the meeting were marked by a comprehensive exchange of views between Provincial Minister Sohail Shaukat Butt and the divisional directors, focusing on critical issues pertinent to departmental affairs. Attentively listening to the concerns raised by divisional directors from Rawalpindi, Multan, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Muzaffargarh, and Sahiwal, Minister Sohail Shaukat Butt promptly directed Director General Amina Munir to undertake immediate measures for their resolution.

In his address, the minister reiterated the commitment of the Punjab government, under the vision-

ary leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, to empower marginalized and neglected women economically. Emphasizing the pivotal role of skilled and financially independent women in driving economic progress, he highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance facilities at Model Children Homes, Kashana, and Chaman, catering to orphans and vulnerable children. Furthermore, the minister affirmed the government's pledge to establish shelter homes and state-of-the-art residential facilities across all divisions and districts, ensuring comprehensive support for those in need.

Sohail Shaukat Butt underscored that the Department of Social Welfare transcends mere employment opportunities, emphasizing its unwavering commitment to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable women, the elderly, and children. Noting the strides made in providing services for special children, he acknowledged the continuous reforms to further enhance the department's efficacy.

## FWO successfully rescues tourist families trapped near Khunjerab

GILGIT (Online): Frontier Works Organization has successfully rescued tourist families trapped near Khunjerab Pass where an avalanche blocked road for all traffic yesterday.

The 150 meters long avalanche hemmed in more than 60 vehicles and over 180 tourist families.

Heavy machinery of FWO removed the avalanche and medical teams of Pakistan Army started providing assistance to the stranded tourists who faced serious health risks due to extreme cold weather.

## Man shot, injured over old enmity

MULTAN (APP): A middle-aged man was shot at and injured over an old enmity at Kund Sargana in the limits of Saera Saidu police station. According to police, the accused, Ramzan alias Rami opened fire with 30-bore pistol on Mehdi Sargana.

## Emergency flood control room setup at CM Secretariat

PESHAWAR (APP): Keeping in view of the possible flood situation due to ongoing spell of torrential rains in the province, "Emergency Flood Control Room" has been established at Chief Minister's Secretariat, with the purpose to coordinate with relevant stakeholders regarding all kind of activities/information and emergencies across the province.

The control room will perform duties round the clock and bring the information into the notice of Chief Minister in case of any kind of emergency or untoward situation anywhere in the province.

Deputy Secretary (Governance) of Chief Minister's Secretariat Mohsin Iqbal has been nominated as Focal Person/In-charge of the Emergency Flood Control Room, which can be accessed on the following numbers:  
UAN: 091-111-712-713, Fax No: 091-9210707, WhatsApp No: 0343-2222949. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has directed the district administrations, Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Rescue Service and all other relevant entities to remain on high alert in order to effectively deal with any possible emergency situation, further directing them to ensure all kind of required arrangements so as to mini-

mize the possible losses to human lives and properties in the prevailing situation.

He has also directed the district administration and local government bodies to ensure availability of relevant staff in the field, adding that SOPs and directives issued by PDMA in this regard must be implemented. He has directed the concerned quarters to regularly monitor the flood situation in the rivers and to take necessary arrangements for protection, rescue and relief of the people in case of any flood emergency. "Affected and displaced people due to rain related incidents be provided with temporary accommodation."



PESHAWAR: Volunteers of Al-Khidmat Foundation are busy in rescue operation due to stagnant rainwater caused by poor sewerage system, showing negligence of concerned authorities, at Sardar Colony.

## Ministers visit flood-affected areas of Peshawar

Independent Report  
PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, accompanied by the Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi on Monday paid a visit to 25 villages and residential colonies situated alongside Budhni Nala.

They visited Charsadda Road, Pajagi Road, Shahi Kotha, Sardar Colony, Shagi Hindkian, and Hassan Ghari and other areas affected by heavy rains in Peshawar city. The visit was also attended by

Senate nominee Irfan Salim, AC Shah Alam, and other party officials.

During the visit, the ministers inspected flood-affected houses, interacted with the affected populace, and assured them of relief efforts to mitigate their losses. Expressing condolences for the loss of life and property, they instructed relevant authorities to take necessary measures, including implementing safety protocols to protect the lives and property of citizens.

## High flood warning in Indus River in Kohistan

KOHISTAN (APP): The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) on Monday issued a warning of high flood in the Indus River in Kohistan region with surge in water level in the Dasu Dam.

The Authority advised the people living along the banks of the River Indus to take immediate precautionary measures and move to safer locations. According to WAPDA officials, the water level in Dasu Dam had substantially increased leading to the release of excess water into the Indus River.

## Police nab drug dealer, accomplice after encounter

KARACHI (APP): The District City Police successfully apprehended a notorious drug dealer and his associate following an encounter. A spokesperson for the District City Police disclosed that the apprehended individuals, identified as Haji Riasat and Jamshed, were found in possession of a hand grenade, a pistol with ammunition, and drugs. Their arrest transpired within the jurisdiction of the Baghdad police station. Haji Riasat, known for his significant involvement in drug trafficking within Old Golimar and Jehanabad.

## ATC extends physical remand of 8 accused involved in kidnapping for ransom

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Monday extended the physical remand of eight members of a gang involved in three cases of kidnapping for ransom for another 14 days.

Earlier, the police produced the accused - Muhammad Hassan, Nadeem Haider, Muhammad Shahzad, Muhammad Amir, Muhammad Ali Butt, Azeem Dar, and others before ATC Judge Arshad Javed upon the expiry of the remand term.

The investigation officer apprised the court that investigations were under-

way with the accused, and their further physical remand was required.

The court extended the physical remand for another 14 days and ordered to produce the accused on April 29. The police claimed that the accused had kidnapped three citizens and received millions of rupees as ransom. It stated that the accused received Rs 500 million as ransom in cryptocurrency in two different incidents. The accused kidnapped Naemur Rehman, the owner of VRCC Cryptocurrency Company, and withdrew millions of rupees from his cryptocurrency accounts.

## Development schemes should be completed with quality as soon as possible: Nasir

Most of consultant companies performance is disappointing so review and terminate the contract: Provincial Minister

Independent Report  
KARACHI: Provincial Minister for Development and Planning Syed Nasir Hussain presided



over a high-level meeting of the P&D Board that was held at the Sindh Secretariat today. In the meeting, there was a detailed discussion regarding the development schemes in the province. Chairman Development Board Engineer Syed Najam Ahmad Shah gave a detailed briefing and told the meeting about the ongoing development projects in the province. The meeting was informed in detail about future development projects and planning. Minister

Nasir Shah said that all development projects should be completed transparently on merit and on time. He said that the performance

of most of the consultant companies is disappointing, so the performance of all consultant companies should be re-evaluated and the work of only those companies with good performance should be continued on merit while others are performing poorly, contracts of the companies should be terminated.

Minister added that safe city projects should be started at the divisional level, in this regard the concerned members of the as-

semblies should be taken onboard, they will be included in this project and they should also be involved in the funding. Nasir Shah emphasized on this occasion that the schemes should be thoroughly reviewed and prepared in such a way that they do not need to be revised. In the case of revising, not only the expenses of the government increase, but due to the delay of the project, the people also have to face difficulties and problems, while it is part of the vision and manifesto of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto that to make Sindh developed and in order to provide maximum relief to the people, it is essential that all development schemes are completed with quality as soon as possible.

Minister said that the performance should be further improved and the speed of work should be increased. He directed on the occasion that all vacant technical posts in the department



## Alem Khan says: Increase in exports to help enhance foreign reserves, stabilise economy

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications Abdul Alem Khan on Monday said that increase in exports was imperative for enhancing foreign reserves and stabilising the national economy.

The private sector should come forward and explore different fields to enhance exports, he said during a meeting with businessmen and investors here at the Governor House.

The minister stressed the need to take special measures, especially in view of Pak-Saudi investment and export agreements.

Alem Khan said, "We have to further expand by investing in export sectors which will ultimately create more jobs".

He urged the private sector to find new opportunities to invest domestically and abroad, for which the government would provide them all possible

facilities. The minister welcomed the visit of a high-level delegation from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He expressed the hope that the private sector would take full advantage of the opportunity, which would also boost bilateral trade between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Federal Secretary Commerce Saleh Farooqui briefed the meeting regarding the export situation.

He said that there was a wide scope in the fields of agriculture, textile, information technology, pharmaceuticals, mobiles, sports equipment, minerals and other sectors.

The meeting was attended by important business personalities, investors and leaders of the business community who announced their full support to the present government.

The participants also expressed their commitment that they would fully cooperate with the high-level delegation from Saudi Arabia.



Finance Minister Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb met with US Pakistan Business Council @ USPBC delegation in Washington D.C. Highlighted govt's commitment to improving business climate & attracting foreign & domestic investments in key sectors including agriculture, IT, mining, & energy.



LAHORE: Chicken retailers protesting for their demands in front of the press club in the Provincial Capital.

## China allows buffalo embryos import from specific regions of Pakistan

BEIJING (APP): China has allowed specific regions of Pakistan to export buffalo embryos that meet its quarantine requirements.

The latitude and longitude coordinates provided in the recent joint announcement of China General Administration of Customs and Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs correspond to the buffalo epidemic-free ranch of Royal Group in Punjab, Chinese media reported.

This marks the first ranch in Pakistan and the only one in the world capable of exporting high-yield buffalo embryos to China.

As one of the first agricultural projects initiated

under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Royal Group's "Buffalo Breeding Project" has made significant progress.

The importation of buffalo embryos into China can significantly shorten the cycle of improving dairy buffalo breeds from 12 years in the past to three years. Additionally, the milk production of a single buffalo can be increased by more than threefold.

In addition, Royal Group has established an in vitro embryo production factory and pastures in Pakistan.

They have also recruited and trained local researchers and farm managers, and provided high-quality

germplasm resources of milk buffalo to Pakistan. This has helped solve the issue of maintaining the local super buffalo resource.

In 2021, the Royal Group established Royal Cell Biotechnology (Pakistan) and officially launched the "Milk Buffalo Provenance Chip" strategy. In the following year, the Royal Cell in vitro embryo production plant was formally inaugurated. Now, local technicians in Pakistan can produce hundreds of high-quality buffalo embryos in a week. The embryos will breed high-yielding milk buffalo herds and greatly increase buffalo milk production once they are introduced to China.

## Steps afoot to cut essential commodities prices: Ch Shafay

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said here Monday that the government under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is making all out efforts to end inflation and dearness, besides reducing the prices of essential commodities after the historic Ramadan package.

The reduction in the prices of wheat bread (Roti/Naan) is a mega step providing relief to the people, he said and added that all the districts administration have also been directed to ensure the implementation of the decision to reduce the

prices of Roti and Naan. The price control committees and other relevant institutions should also play their active role to ensure the sale of Roti at Rs 16 and Naan at Rs 20, he asserted. The Provincial Minister said that measures would be continued to make life easier for the people, citing that welfare schemes are being rapidly promoted across the province.

He vowed that economy would be stabilized by bringing about an industrial revolution in Punjab. "We will increase employment opportunities by bringing new investments," he mentioned.

## Visit of Saudi delegation will be a milestone for Pak's economy: Atif

ISLAMABAD: President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Shaikh termed the visit of the Saudi delegation as a milestone for the economy and hoped that it happens in response to the recent visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan's to the capital of the brotherly kingdom. The focus is on a positive continuation of the investment projects in Pakistan. The pledge to complete the five-billion-dollar investment

trail would soon begin restoring the confidence of investors from all over the world.

Atif Shaikh said investment of this denomination from the platform of the SIFC in the Reco Deq prospect was a positive step for the bolstering the economy. The role of the Investment Council is significant and timely, he added. There is a need for a framework to help widen the possibilities of cooperation in different fields of the economy.

## IMF urges Pakistan to boost revenue via taxing non-essential items including cigarettes

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has been urged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to overhaul its tax machinery through taxing non-essential items including cigarettes to boost revenue and improve public health.

Health advocates have highly appreciated a set of recommendation and taxing non-essential items including cigarettes given by the global lender.

Head of Zaman Research Center at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Prof Muhammad Zaman said, "This is a crucial time for the government to fix economic problems and implement the IMF recommendation."

The IMF report has

referred to a phenomenal study on this subject conducted by Capital Calling, an Islamabad-based think tank, which says the cigarette consumption has decreased due to increase in prices, he added.

Prof Zaman said there was a need to bring into account the cost of morbidity and mortality that smoking inflicts on the society. "Smoking is injurious to health regardless of the cigarette brand," he said.

The head of Zaman Research Center at QAU pointed to critical flaws within Pakistan's tax system particularly the cigarette industry, which have facilitated a loss of Rs567 billion during last seven years, as revealed by the

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

The study further exposed the influence of multinational cigarette companies on policymakers, particularly evident in the introduction of a three-tier excise duty structure in 2017, which prioritized revenue collection over public health considerations. However, subsequent analysis proved this approach to be ineffective and misleading in revenue generation.

The SDPI research highlighting global best practices and how high and middle-income countries have successfully used high cigarette taxes to reduce consumption and boost government revenues.

## Finance Minister meets USPBC delegation in Washington

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday met a delegation of the US Pakistan Business Council (USPBC) in Washington DC to discuss the government's commitment to improving the business climate in the country.

According to a Finance Ministry press release, the minister during the meeting highlighted.



LAHORE: Chairman Kisan Etihad Khalid Hussain Butt addressing a press conference at press club in the Provincial Capital.

## Pak poised for economic growth with strong support from S.Arabia: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Monday said that Pakistan was poised to make economic growth with the strong support of the brotherly country of Saudi Arabia.

He attributed the country's positive economic trajectory to the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, particularly in fostering friendly relations with Islamic nations to bolster investment and business opportunities in Pakistan.

Talking to the media, Ashrafi said a high-level delegation led by Saudi Foreign Minister was expected to arrive in Pakistan on Monday evening, marking a significant milestone in bilateral ties, adding the

visit would underscore the country's appeal as an investment destination among the Muslim states.

The PUC chairman highlighted that both the prime minister and army chief had effectively garnered support and commitments from key stakeholders, including the Saudi leadership and prominent businessmen.

He said concerted efforts made during the last two months to strengthen Pak-Saudi relations, culminating in successful meetings of Pakistan's leadership with top Saudi officials, including Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman and Muslim World League Secretary-General Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa.

Ashrafi said the visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, accompanied by representatives from vital ministries and business sectors.



MULTAN: Labourers are busy in spreading sheep wool for drying at their workplace.

## PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 229 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 229.86 points, a positive change of 0.33 percent, closing at 70,544.58 points against 70,314.72 points the previous trading day.

A total of 555,214,972 shares valuing Rs.21,986 billion were traded during the day as compared to 389,396,548 shares valuing Rs.17,273 billion the last day. Some 353 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 180 of them recorded gains and

156 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 17 remained unchanged.

In PSX, the three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 88,622,330 shares at Rs.1.39 per share, Fauji Cement with 33,100,985 shares with Rs.20.01 per share and Fauji Foods Limited with 30,022,192 shares at Rs.10.05 per share.

Bata Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.25.00 per share price, closing at Rs.1,725.00, whereas the runner-up was Sugar Engineering Works Limited.

## Pak rupee stable against US dollar in interbank market

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistani rupee stayed on course against the US dollar as business resumed in the interbank market on Monday after long Eid break.

As per the information obtained from the forex dealers, the local currency appreciated by 16 paisas against the greenback and was currently being traded at Rs277.78.

On the last business day before Eid, the Pakistani rupee had remained largely stable against the US dollar, settling at Rs277.93 on Tuesday.

In a key development, Pakistan's economic team led by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb had left for Washington on Sunday to hold talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new bailout programme.

Talks between Pakistan and the IMF are scheduled for this week in Washington, wherein the government team will request the Fund for approval of a new loan programme. The main ministerial meetings and events will be held from April 17-19.

## Industry in grip of deep economic crisis amid high marks: SVC FRIA

LAHORE (INP): Senior Vice Chairman (SVC) Ferozpur Road Industrial Association (FRIA), Shabbaz Aslam said that the country is in the middle of a deep economic crisis amid interest rates hikes and soaring inflation with its major debt sustainability indicators witnessing marked deterioration.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he said that amid the crippling economic crisis, the govt will have to return \$77.5 billion as external debt in the next three years. Quoting the media reports, he noted that a major portion of the \$77.5 billion is owed to China, and has to be paid in June when a \$1 billion Chinese SAFE deposit and a roughly \$1.4 billion Chinese commercial loan would mature.

Shabbaz Aslam stated that the total public debt and liabilities of the country has presently been standing at Rs68 trillion in FY22-23, expressing the fear that it would go further by Rs11.8 trillion in the current fiscal year.

He pointed out that the total public debt and liabilities would go up manifold mainly because of the rising fiscal deficit and it is estimated that fiscal deficit would escalate by Rs8.227 trillion for the current fiscal year, equivalent to 7.8 percent of GDP. The SVC FRIA said that the government will have to manage budget financing to the tune of Rs7.5 trillion through domestic avenues and only Rs1 trillion would be made available as budgetary support from foreign avenues.



Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications, Abdul Alem Khan presided over a meeting of business community in Karachi.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): A ship 'Nicholas' with 56,277 tonnes of Coal, berthed at Pakistan International Bulk Terminal on Sunday.

Meanwhile, four more ships, Fast, MSC Nilgun, High Trader and Navigation Vega also arrived at outer-anchorage of Port Qasim during the last 24 hours.

A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them an edible oil carrier 'TTC Vishaka' left the Port today morning while another ship 'Lusail' is expected to sail today.

Cargo volume of 103,652 tonnes, comprising 9,419 tonnes of export cargo carried in 441 Containers was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 8 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Fast, Gall and MSC Nilgun & two more ships, MSC Vilda-X and XT Brightness are scheduled to load/offload Cement, Palm oil, Container and Chemicals are expected to take berths at MW-2, LCT, QICT and EVTL.

## Pakistan's regional exports increase 20.57% in 8 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's exports to the seven regional countries witnessed an increase of 20.57 per cent in the first eight months of the financial year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

The country's exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$2,912.102 million, which is 14.17 per cent of Pakistan's overall exports of \$20,537.900 million during July-February (2023-24), State Bank

of Pakistan (SBP) reported. China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Pakistan carried out its border trade with the farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives.

Pakistan's exports to China witnessed an increase of 42.02 per cent to \$1,895.720 million in eight months of this year from \$1,334.804 million last year while exports to Afghanistan witnessed a nominal decline of 7.68 percent from

\$346.522 million to \$319.887 million.

The country's exports to Bangladesh also decreased by 19.63 percent to \$421.939 million this year from \$525.017 whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 32.31 percent to \$266.164 million from \$201.165.

The exports to India increased to \$0.230 million from \$0.161 million in the previous year.

Exports to Nepal increased by 5.66 per cent to \$2.164 million from 2.048 million while to Maldives increased by 8.11 per cent to \$5.548 million from 5.998 million, it added.

## Eid Festival Bazaars to be organized in all markets from next year

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, Deputy Commissioner, Islamabad has said that the business community is the key player in the economic development of the country and that he would initiate all the necessary steps to facilitate it.

He said this while addressing the closing ceremony of Eid Festival Bazaar on Chand Raat at Abpara market as Chief Guest. It is worth mentioning that the ICCI in collaboration with the Traders Welfare Associations organized Eid Festivals at five different markets of the capital to enable the customers to buy articles of their choice at affordable price, said a press release issued here on Monday.

Deputy Commissioner appreciated the ICCI and the Traders Welfare Associations for organizing Eid Festival Bazaars for the benefit of the consumers. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the Aabpara Market is the oldest market of Islamabad and is playing central role in improving the economy by promoting trade activities and that ICCI would continue to work with relevant government departments to resolve the issues of the business community.

He was also impressed by Capital Development Authority that focused on the beautification of the market.



LAHORE: Farmers are busy in harvesting wheat crop near Ravi River.



# US to 'steer clear' if Israel responds to Iran's onslaught

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The United States said on Sunday it will not join any Israeli counterattack on Iran, with President Joe Biden warning Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "think carefully" about any escalation.

The White House said Mr Biden did not want a wider war after helping key ally Israel repel a massive aerial attack by Tehran — itself in retaliation for a presumed Israeli strike that killed senior Iranian military officers in Damascus.

"We are not looking for a wider war with Iran," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on NBC's "Meet the Press," adding that the United States does not "want to see this escalate."

Mr Kirby said Mr

Netanyahu was "well aware" of Mr Biden's feelings after the two leaders spoke on Saturday while Iran's unprecedented attack was still unfolding.

The assault saw Iran fire more than 300 drones and missiles towards Israel late Saturday, injuring 12 people, the Israeli army said.

US officials said American warplanes had brought down around 70 drones while US ships downed between four and six ballistic missiles.

But a senior Biden administration official confirmed that Mr Biden had told Mr Netanyahu that Washington would not offer military support for any retaliation on Iran.

"We would not be a part of any response they do," the official told reporters on a call, speaking on

condition of anonymity. "We would not envision ourselves participating in such an act," he said.

"A big question is not only whether, but what Israel might choose to do, and so this is a decision for them," the Biden administration official said.

Mr Biden and Mr Netanyahu spoke at a time of "heightened emotion" and "had a discussion about trying to slow things down". The US president "made very clear to the prime minister last night that we do have to think carefully and strategically about the risks of escalation".

Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said that 99 per cent of the launches had been intercepted, declaring that "the Iranian attack was foiled".



Displaced Palestinians take the coastal Rashid Road to return to Gaza City as they pass through Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip.

# Philippines' Marcos has no plans to grant US access to more bases

**Monitoring Desk**  
MANILA: The Philippines has no plans to grant the United States access to more military bases, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said on Monday, after nearly doubling the number last year under a joint defence pact. Beijing has previously accused the Philippines of "stoking the fire" when it increased the number of bases the US military could use to nine from five, with the new sites located close to potential flashpoints.

"The answer to that is no," Marcos said in response to a query whether the Philippines would al-

low the US access to more bases. "The Philippines has no plan to create any more bases or give access to any more bases," he told a forum with foreign correspondents.

Last year Washington and Manila discussed further expanding the number of bases US forces could access under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) from nine.

Three of the four sites faced north towards Taiwan and one was near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, where Manila and Beijing have had frequent maritime run-ins that included China's

use of water cannon and collision tactics. US President Joe Biden, who hosted Marcos and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Washington last week at a first-of-its-kind three-way summit, has asked Congress for a further \$128 million for infrastructure projects at the nine EDCA sites.

The three leaders expressed "serious concerns" about China's "dangerous and aggressive behaviour" in the South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce claimed by China despite overlapping claims by other countries.

# Stalled Gaza talks: Hamas, Israel exchange recriminations

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: Israel and Hamas have accused each other of undermining negotiations for a truce in Gaza and a hostage release deal, although the talks have not collapsed. While Hamas-backed Iran was preparing to launch hundreds of drones and missiles at Israel in retaliation for a deadly Damascus strike, the Palestinian group announced on Saturday that it had delivered its response to the latest ceasefire proposal. Without explicitly rejecting the draft deal, Hamas reiterated its longstanding demands for a permanent ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, which Israeli officials have repeatedly opposed.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has instead reiterated his determi-

nation to launch a ground invasion of Rafah, the last city in Gaza yet to face such a fate and which Israel insists is Hamas's last major holdout, despite strong opposition from the United States.

Netanyahu accused Hamas of being the "only obstacle" to a deal that would free the Israeli prisoners. "The cabinet and the security forces are united in their opposition to these unfounded demands," he said, adding that Hamas "has refused any deal and any compromise proposal". On Sunday, Israel's Mossad spy agency said in a statement released by Netanyahu's office that Hamas had rejected the proposal, and said it "proves" that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar "does not want a humanitarian deal" and the return of prisoners.

# Sudan's uprooted millions pay price for year-long war

**Monitoring Desk**  
CAIRO: After fleeing from the war in Sudan to Egypt, Mohamed Ismail says his ambitions are limited to putting food in the mouths of his five children from a meagre monthly salary of about \$100 earned at a paper factory in Giza.

One seven-year-old son sleeps in his arms because of the trauma of hearing explosions before they fled from the outskirts of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, in January.

A year of war between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has driven more than 8.5 million people from their homes, creating the world's largest displacement crisis and uprooting families multiple times as people struggle to escape to neighbouring countries with economic and security problems of their own. Financial challenges have led some to return to the war-stricken capital.

"Being safe somewhere is the most impor-

tant thing," said Ismail, 42. "We're not even thinking about education because the economic situation doesn't allow that. As a parent that really impacts you, but we are helpless."

Sudan's war erupted on April 15, 2023, over a planned political transition under which the army, led by Abdel Fattah el-Burhan, and the RSF, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, were competing to protect their interests.

Fighting tore through the capital and unleashed waves of ethnically-driven violence in the western region of Darfur, before spreading to other areas including Gezira state, an important farming region that became an aid hub where many had sought refuge.

When the RSF entered the state's main city Wad Madani in December, looting and occupying neighbourhoods as they had done in the capital, many were uprooted for a second time.



SCHNECKSVILLE: Former president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally.

# 4 wounded in Sydney church stabbing days after mall knife attack

**Monitoring Desk**  
SYDNEY: Emergency services said four people are being treated for "non-life threatening injuries" after an apparent stabbing at a church service in Sydney on Monday.

The incident comes just two days after a knife rampage in an eastern Sydney shopping mall killed six people. A live stream showed Monday's gruesome attack, which took place during a service at an Assyrian church in the west of the city.

The video showed a man dressed in black approaching a bishop at the

dais, raising his right arm and slashing at the preacher with a knife, prompting panic and screams among the congregation. Several people appeared to rush to help subdue the attacker.

Officers arrested a male and he is assisting police with inquiries, a police statement said.

The injured people suffered non-life-threatening injuries and were being treated by paramedics, police said.

The ambulance service told AFP that four men aged between 20 and 70 were being treated for injuries, including lacerations.

# Trump fans brave chill to hear Republican 'martyr' speak before trial

**Monitoring Desk**  
SCHNECKSVILLE: Donald Trump's mounting legal woes are just more reason to stick behind the former president, his ardent supporters said on Saturday, just days before the Republican leader's historic criminal trial gets underway in New York.

Gathered in the small Pennsylvania town of Schnecksville, his impassioned backers said they believe Trump will come out of the proceedings stronger than ever.

# Iran says MSC Aries vessel seized for 'violating maritime laws'

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: A Portuguese-flagged container ship, the MSC Aries, was seized by Iran on April 13 for "violating maritime laws", Iran's foreign ministry said on Monday, adding that there was no doubt the vessel was linked to Israel.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized the cargo vessel in the Strait of Hormuz days after Tehran vowed to retaliate for a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Damascus on April 1. Iran had said it could close the crucial shipping route.

"The vessel was diverted into Iran's territorial waters as a result of violating maritime laws and not answering calls made by Iranian authorities," spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said.

Iran launched a barrage of missiles and explosive drones on Saturday in its first direct attack on Israeli territory, a strike that Tehran said was self-defence after the bombing of the consulate.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported that a Guards helicopter had boarded the MSC Aries and taken it into Iranian waters.

MSC, which operates the Aries, confirmed Iran had seized the ship and said it was working "with the relevant authorities" for its safe return and the wellbeing of its 25 crew.

MSC leases the Aries from Gortal Shipping, an affiliate of Zodiac Maritime, Zodiac said in a statement, adding that MSC is responsible for all the vessel's activities.

# 19 killed, two missing after Indonesia landslide

**Monitoring Desk**  
JAKARTA: At least 19 people have been found dead and two more are missing after a landslide in central Indonesia, local authorities said on Sunday.

The dead and two survivors were evacuated from two landslide-hit villages in Tana Toraja regency, South Sulawesi province on Saturday evening, said local disaster agency head Sulaiman Malia.

"There have been 19 fatalities, with 4 deaths in South Makale and 15 others in Makale villages," Malia said on Sunday.

"Currently, we are still searching for other victims," he said, adding that there are still two individuals reported missing, presumably buried under the landslide debris.



National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) shows a landslide site in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi.

# Airlines suspend flights due to Middle East tensions

**Monitoring Desk**  
TEL AVIV: Iran's missile and drone attacks on Israel on Friday further narrowed options for airlines navigating between Europe and Asia. While Israel, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon reopened their airspace on Sunday, some routes continue to be affected.

Germany's Lufthansa suspended its regular flights to and from Tel Aviv, Erbil and Amman up to and including Monday. Flights to Beirut and Tehran will remain suspended until at least Thursday. KLM canceled all flights to and from Tel Aviv until Tuesday, a spokesperson for the Dutch arm of Air France KLM said on Monday.

Britain's easyJet on Sunday paused operations to and from Tel Aviv without providing a timeframe.

Wizz Air said it had cancelled most of its flights to and from Tel Aviv on Saturday through Monday.

Finnair suspended operations in Iranian airspace until further notice, which may cause longer flight times on flights from Doha. A spokesperson said the Finnish carrier will reroute over Egypt, resulting in delays of a "few minutes".

A SAS spokesperson said flights between Copenhagen and Bangkok fly partially over the region, and one flight had to reroute on the night between Saturday and Sunday. IAG-owned Iberia Express said on the X social media it would cancel flights to Tel Aviv on Sunday and Monday. United Airlines cancelled Sunday's planned flight from Newark to Tel Aviv, it said in an emailed statement to Reuters.

Air Canada warned of long delays and cancellations on its Israel flights, and cancelled flights to Tel Aviv on Monday, and Tuesday.

# Delhi court extends detention of opposition leader Kejriwal until April 23: report

**Monitoring Desk**  
PUDUCHERRY: A Delhi court extended on Monday the detention of Indian opposition leader Arvind Kejriwal in a graft case until April 23, legal news website Live Law reported, a setback to the opposition which needs him to campaign in general elections that begin this week.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), India's financial crime-fighting agency, arrested Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi, in a corruption case related to the city's liquor policy and he had been remanded to custody until April 15.

Kejriwal has challenged his arrest saying it is unlawful and in a separate hearing on Monday, the supreme court of India asked the ED to respond to the challenge in the week of April 29, after which it will hear the case. Kejriwal is a fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and rejects the charges.

# Unpopular Sunak in 'doom loop' as UK PM stares at election defeat

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: He's failed to meet key pledges, hit an opinion poll low, and even cramped the style of a popular Adidas shoe: Britain's beleaguered Conservative leader Rishi Sunak appears destined to lose a looming general election.

Two tax cuts and a slightly improving economy have failed to boost Sunak's political fortunes, while criticism from ex-prime minister Boris Johnson and speculation over Brexit figurehead Nigel

Farage's intentions are adding to his woes.

Political scientist Rob Ford reckoned Sunak has been left looking "hapless" in the face of seemingly unstoppable political momentum away from his ruling Tories. "When the herd moves, it moves. There's not much you can do," he said.

Sunak, 43, has yet to announce the date of the election. He is expected to call it for October or November but is legally allowed to wait until January at the latest.

# Russian strike on Kharkiv region kills two and injures four, governor says

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Russian forces killed two people and injured four more after hitting an education facility in the Kharkiv region on Monday, its governor said. The Russian military used a guided aerial bomb on Lukianski village near the Russian border, the region's governor, Oleh Syniehubov, said on the Telegram messaging app. Syniehubov added that the four people injured in the attack were hospitalized with blast injuries.

# Floods grip Kazakhstan and Russia as tributaries of Ob rise

**Monitoring Desk**  
PETROPAVLOVSK: Swathes of northern Kazakhstan and Russia's Urals region were flooded on Monday as melt waters swelled the tributaries of the world's seventh longest river system, forcing more than 125,000 people to flee their homes.

Russia's southern Ural region and northern Kazakhstan have been grappling with the worst flooding in living memory after very large snow falls melted swiftly amid heavy rain over land already waterlogged before winter.

That has swelled the tributaries of the Ob, which

rises in the Altai Mountains of southern Siberia and empties into the Arctic Ocean, beyond bursting point, leaving some cities in Russia and Kazakhstan under water. A Reuters journalist said several districts of the northern Kazakh city of Petropavlovsk were completely flooded. The city which sits on the Ishim River, a tributary of the Irtysh, the chief tributary of the Ob.

Almost 1,000 houses have been flooded in the North Kazakhstan region of which Petropavlovsk is the centre, and over 5,000 people have been evacuated, local officials said.

# Somali Pirates free ship and crew after ransom 'air-dropped'

**Monitoring Desk**  
CHITTAGONG: Somali pirates freed a Bangladesh-flagged cargo vessel and its 23 crew on Sunday after sackloads of US dollars were air-dropped to them in ransom, the company and relatives said.

The bulk carrier MV Abdullah was transporting more than 55,000 tonnes of coal from Maputo to the United Arab Emirates when it was seized by dozens of pirates around 550 nautical miles (1,000kms) off the Somali coast a month ago. The seizure came amid a surge in Somali pirate activity.

# US to announce additional \$100 million in aid to respond to Sudan conflict

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The United States will announce an additional \$100 million in aid to respond to the conflict in Sudan, according to a statement seen by Reuters, as Washington seeks to spur international response ahead of Monday's anniversary of the war.

US Agency for International Development Administrator Samantha Power in the statement said the additional funding, first reported by Reuters, would go toward emergency food assistance, nutrition support and other life-saving aid.

Power is also set to call on the warring parties to stop hindering humanitarian access and participate in "good faith negotiations to reach a ceasefire" in order to prevent famine and further suffering, according to the statement.

"A year ago tomorrow, the people of Sudan awoke to a nightmare," Power said.

"The warring sides turned bustling neighbourhoods into battle zones, killing thousands, leaving bodies in the streets, and trapping civilians in their homes without adequate food, water, and medicines."

War erupted in Sudan on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), devastating the country's infrastructure.

Thousands of civilians have been killed, although death toll estimates are highly uncertain, and both sides have been accused of committing war crimes. The war has pushed millions into extreme hunger, created the world's largest displacement crisis, and triggered waves of ethnically driven killings and sexual violence in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

Washington's announcement of further assistance comes ahead of a humanitarian conference in France on April 15.

# Lawmakers brawl as Georgian parliament considers 'foreign agent' bill

**Monitoring Desk**  
TBILISI: Georgian lawmakers came to blows in parliament on Monday as ruling party legislators looked set to advance a controversial bill on "foreign agents" that has been criticised by Western countries and sparked protests at home.

Footage broadcast on Georgian television showed Mamuka Mdivaradze, leader of the ruling Georgian Dream party's parliamentary faction and a driving force behind the bill, being punched in the face by opposition MP Aleko Elisashvili while speaking from the despatch box.

The incident prompted a wider brawl between several lawmakers, an occasional occurrence in Georgia's often raucous parliament. Footage showed Elisashvili being greeted with cheers by protesters outside the parliament building.

Georgian Dream said earlier this month it would reintroduce legislation re-

quiring organisations that accept funds from abroad to register as foreign agents or face fines, 13 months after protests forced it to shelve the plan.

The bill has strained relations with European countries and the United States, who have said they oppose its passage. The European Union, which gave Georgia candidate status in December, has said the move is incompatible with the bloc's values.

Georgian Dream says it wants the country to join the EU and NATO, even as it has deepened ties with Russia and faced accusations of authoritarianism at home. It says the bill is necessary to combat what it calls "pseudo-liberal values" imposed by foreigners, and to promote transparency. Georgia's government said Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze held a meeting on Monday with the EU, British and US ambassadors at which they had discussed the bill.



Supporters of India's opposition party, Indian National Congress (INC) await the arrival of their party President Mallikarjun Kharge, in Puducherry.



## Governor calls for providing new vision to make public sector universities financially self-sufficient & stable

**Independent Report**  
**QUETTA:** The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stressed that heavy responsibility rests on us to provide new vision for making financially self-sufficient and stable with consensus and mutual understanding. It would contribute a lot for bringing improvement in higher education in the province. He said that self-sufficiency of all public sector universities and educational development requires from us to make daring decisions. The Governor directed all the concerned vice Chancellors of the public sector universities to ensure merit in recruitments and promotions and visit different classes during the studies.

The Governor was speaking to the Vice Chancellor of University of Balochistan, Dr. Zahoor Ahmed Bazai, Vice Chancellor of University of Loralai, Dr. Ehsanullah Kakar, Vice Chancellor, Engineering University of Khuzdar, Professor Dr. Maqsood Ahmed and Vice Chancellor, Turbat University, Professor Jan Muhammad Baloch, who called on him here separately on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, Governor made it clear that the big objectives can be made possible with big resolve and determination. He said that it is high time to adopt national thinking and approach remaining above the petty differences and personal interests.



**QUETTA:** Vice Chancellor University of Loralai Dr. Ehsanullah Khan Kakar and acting Vice Chancellor University of Balochistan Dr. Zahoor Bazai meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

## MQM-P warns of taking to streets if crimes in Karachi not stopped

**KARACHI (INP):** Mutahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has warned of taking to the streets if the government fails to curb the rampant scourge of street crimes in Karachi. "We would raise our voice [on the issue] in the Sindh Assembly and in the National Assembly [...] and would protest on the streets if our concerns are not addressed," MQM-P's Ali Khurshidi said while addressing a press conference in Karachi. His remarks come as Karachi has witnessed a significant surge in street crimes in recent months which have resulted in dozens of injuries and fatalities. Since January 1, at least 59 people have lost their lives while 200 were injured due to resisting robbery this year so far in the metropolis. According to Geo News, as many as 6,780 crimes were committed in Karachi in the holy month of Ramadan alone in which 20 vehicles were snatched and more than 130 others stolen. Moreover, 830 motorcycles were also snatched with 4,200 others stolen in the same month. Meanwhile, 19 people lost their lives in Ramadan while 55 were injured. The two parties, both of whom are key allies of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) government in the Centre, have been engaged in a verbal spat in recent weeks over the issue of street crimes in the city. Last month, Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar termed crime a "part of a daily life" saying that the issue of the law-and-order situation in Karachi was being "exaggerated". The remarks drew ire from various sections of society and political parties, most notably the MQM-P which has even called for the country's financial hub to be handed over to the Pakistan Army for three months. Flanked by Nasreen Jilil and others, Khurshidi lamented police's failure saying that no street in Karachi was safe. Claiming that more than 1,000 mobile phones are snatched daily in Karachi, the member of the Sindh Assembly called out the Pakistan Peoples Party-led provincial government for blaming the law-and-order situation on the caretaker government despite its 15-year rule in Sindh. "Mobile phones worth more than Rs10 billion are snatched every year [...] If crimes are not stopped, then we [are forced to] question whether the criminals are being supported by the police. "We have held two press conferences so that the government machinery may come into action [...]"



**QUETTA:** Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over a meeting regarding provision of clean drinking water to people of Gwadar

## Action being taken against encroachments on nullahs: PDMA and QMC teams engaged in post-rain situation, say DG PDMA, Commissioner

**Independent Report**  
**QUETTA:** The field teams of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) are engaged in post-rain situation in the provincial metropolis. The action is also being taken against the encroachments established on nullahs located in different parts of the metropolis. This was informed by the Director General PDMA, Jahanzaib Khan and Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafaqat while speaking to the media persons at the PDMA office on Monday afternoon. The DG PDMA said that heavy rains were recorded in and around Quetta city during last few days. He pointed out that there are several encroachments on the drainage nullahs in and around Quetta. He said that if the action was not taken against encroachments, then similar situation would have to be faced in future. Speaking on occasion, Commissioner Quetta mentioned that total 156 millimeter rain was recorded during past few days in Quetta. He said that the width of drainage nullahs have been squeezed from 40 feet to 20 feet only due to the encroachments. He said that the damages have been caused due to the encroachments on the nullahs. He said that only solution to escape from the damages following rains is to take action against encroachments. The Commissioner said that we would be able to remove encroachments if there was no hurdle in the operation.

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## DC inspects rain drains of Sirki Road, directs to construct 24 drains holes

**QUETTA (APP)-** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Quetta Lieutenant @ Saad bin Asad inspected the rain drain of Sirki Road along with the relevant contractor and issued orders to construct 24 drain holes in the next 7 hours. He said that due to non-availability of workers, the work was being hampered. Additionally, cleaning would be done with heavy machinery at 11 pm because vehicles were parked at these points. He gave instructions that traffic has been ordered to divert vehicles from the left and right sides of the road from Bareach Market to Lehri Chowk.

## Four die as roof collapse in Bara

**PESHAWAR (APP):** At least four people of the same family including women and children were killed and six others injured when roof of a room, collapsed due to heavy downpour in Shin Drang area of Bara tehsil in Khyber district on Monday. Rescue 1122 officials said the unfortunate incident occurred near Abaseen School in Shin Drang where the roof of a room.

## ANP Balochistan chapter election to be held on April 26

**QUETTA (APP):** The Awami National Party (ANP) Balochistan chapter intra-party election would be held on April 26 at 10 a.m. under the supervision of Central Election Chairman Mian Ifikhar Hussain. In a meeting of the Provincial Election Commission of ANP, in which Secretary Provincial Election Commission Sanaulah Kakar, members Malik Mehrab Khan Kakar and Anwar Khan Mandukhail discussed the ANP intra-party elections and the steps taken so far was declared satisfactory. It was decided in the meeting that the district elections of Awami National Party district Qila Abdullah will be held on April 23 at 10 a.m. (Tuesday), while the provincial elections will be held on Friday, April 26 at 10 a.m., in which Central Election Commission Chairman Mian Ifikhar Hussain and other members will participate. In the meeting, the steps taken so far related to the provincial elections were reviewed and the preparations for the holding of elections were discussed in detail. Chairman of the Provincial Election Commission Obaidullah Abid called the meeting of the Provincial Election Commission on Wednesday, April 17 at 2 p.m.

## Alem visits Chinese Embassy

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications Abdul Alem Khan visited the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad on Monday. He called on Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong and expressed his deep sorrow over the recent accident of Chinese engineers, said a press release. Abdul Alem Khan while talking to the Chinese Ambassador said that Pakistan-China friendship is a symbol of economic stability and peace in the region.



**QUETTA:** Commissioner Quetta and Administrator Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafaqat chairs a high level meeting regarding rain emergency.

## Eight killed, 12 injured due to rains in KP

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday issued a report on the loss of life and property in the province due to heavy rains during the last three days. According to preliminary reports, eight people were killed and 12 people were injured. Four children, three men and a woman are among the dead persons, while the injured include four women, six men and two children. According to the report, a total of 85 houses were damaged due to the collapse of walls and roofs in different districts, of which 15 houses were completely damaged and 70 houses were partially damaged. Due to heavy rain, life and financial accidents took place in different districts of Dir Upper, Chitral Lower, Swat, Malakand and Bajaur. The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa directed the concerned district administration to provide immediate assistance to the affected family and provide the best medical facilities.

## Opp. unable to lead protest movement against govt: Gabol

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** Member National Assembly (MNA) and Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) leader, Sardar Nabil Ahmed Gabol on Monday scrapped the Opposition claims of leading a protest movement against the ruling coalition government and claimed it unable to start the protest campaign due to division within its factions. Talking to APP outside the Parliament House, the PPPP policy maker categorically stated that the Opposition was divided within its ranks and files which had further diluted its strength within the House. **Fawad granted interim bail till April 20 in 4 cases** **LAHORE (Online):** The Anti-Terrorism Court granted the bail to Fawad Chaudhary till April 20 in 4 cases relating to May 9. On Monday, Judge Arshad Javed heard the bail application in the Anti-Terrorism Court. Earlier, Fawad Chaudhary filed an application for interim bail in four cases of May 9. The court also asked for the records of the cases from the police on the next hearing. Earlier, the hearing of the fraud case against former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry was adjourned without proceeding.



**QUETTA:** View of destruction due to stagnant rainwater causing of poor sewerage system creating problems for commuters and residents after heavy downpour, at Hazarganji area in Quetta.

## Irrigation official says Dams located in vicinity of Quetta city safe, there no danger from recent rains

**QUETTA (APP):** All dams located in the vicinity of Quetta city are safe and there is no danger of from recent rains, currently, 10,000 acre feet of water have been stored in the dams. Citizens should avoid going into the water in view of any danger, the Irrigation Department is constantly monitoring the dams. These views were expressed by Official of the Irrigation Department on Monday. He said that the dams located in the vicinity of Quetta city were completely safe and there was no danger from the recent rains. He said that the dams located in the outskirts of Quetta city have the capacity to store 25 thousand acre feet of water, at present, more than 10,000 acre feet of water have been stored. Official said that some people were busy trying to create panic among people by sharing pictures of flood water after rains in August 2022, saying that citizens did not listen fake of news panic, none of the dams were in danger. He said that a rumor was spread last night that Karkhsa Dam was full of water and may break anytime after which Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafaqat, Deputy Commissioner Sad Bin Asad and Irrigation officials visited Karkhsa Dam. He said that they were told that the dam has a capacity to store 850,000 feet of water, while up to 300 acre feet of water has been stored in the dam so far, water could be stored up to 55 feet in the dam, currently, the water has been stored up to 20 feet. Official said that the Wali Tangi Dam has a capacity of 380 acre feet which was fully filled, Spinkariz Dam has a storage capacity of 2500 acre feet of which 1200 acre feet has been stored. Some dams have a storage capacity of 650 acre feet of water which is fully filled, after which the water is going to Sara Ghargai Dam through the spillway, in which 250 feet of water has been collected, while the dams in Aghbarg have a capacity of 2,200 acre feet of water storage, he said. He said that out of which one dam has been completely filled, while one dam has collected 1000 feet acre while the other has stored 800 feet acre of water.

## SIFC starts improvement in national edu. policy as per modern needs

**ISLAMABAD (Online):** Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has started collaborations with stakeholders at federal and provincial levels to improve national education policy in line with the demands of international market. Under the initiative, suitable institutions will be established for technical and vocational training along with basic educational standards.

## Pervez Khattak mulls joining politics again

**PESHAWAR (INP):** Former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Pervez Khattak has decided to join politics again, Dunya News learnt. According to family sources, the seasoned politician is in contact with the PPP and other parties. He also held several meetings with key political leaders during the last few days. Speaking to Dunya News, the veteran politician said he would take a decision after analysing the political situation. "I am silently observing the performance of the government nowadays," he said. He said the development schemes of Rs10 billion were approved for Nowshera but they had been reverted. "The people of Nowshera will now realise their deprivation," he lamented. "I am away from mainstream and social media these days but can take decision to enter politics again soon," he added.



**CHAGAI:** An old man sitting on debris of his house destroyed in recent rains

## Govt taking steps to provide facilities to those affected by recent rains: MPA Samad

**QUETTA (APP)-** Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA), Sardarzada Samad Khan Gorgage said that the government was taking all possible measures to provide facilities to those affected by the rains. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)'s leader Samad Khan Gorgage said that Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and other concerned organizations were busy working with heavy machinery for rainwater drainage. He expressed these views while talking to the citizens on the occasion of his visit to different areas of Quetta affected by the rains immediately after reaching Quetta from Larkana on Sunday and Monday night. On this occasion, Deputy Director of PDMA Faisal Tariq and Pakistan Peoples Party leader Sanaulah Jatak were also with him. Sardarzada Samad Khan Gorgage said that due to climate change, there has been more rain than expected due to which the low-lying areas have been flooded. He said that on special directive of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, PDMA, Quetta Municipal Corporation and other organizations were busy with efforts to ensure water drainage with heavy machinery. He said that citizens should also avoid encroachment on rivers and drainage channels saying that the provincial government would ensure all possible assistance to the victims of the rains and would not leave them alone in this hour of trouble.



**SLAMABAD:** Aseefa Bhutto Zardari addressing National Assembly session after taking oath as MNA.

## Post-rains situation being monitored: Gwadar coastal highway restored for traffic, says Lasbela administration

**Independent Report**  
**QUETTA:** The Gwadar coastal highway has been restored for traffic in Lasbela district on Monday morning. Yaseen Akhtar told that all concerned departments and staff are alert in the area with heavy machinery also placed in the rain affected areas. He said that the district administration is fully alert to cope with any emergent situation in the district. He said that the situation of ongoing spell of rains is being monitored closely so as to give response in case of any emergency. He has asked the general public to call to the control room at 0853-610251 in case of any emergency. However, he urged the people to refrain from unnecessary travelling on the Gwadar-Karachi route. According to the district administration of Lasbela, the traffic has been restored on the coastal highway near Princess of Hope, which otherwise was affected due to heavy rains in the area. The link of Lasbela with Gwadar and rest of Makran and province was disconnected due to the heavy rains and flashflood hit the coastal highway. The Additional Deputy Commissioner General, Lasbela, Syed

## Commissioner monitors drive to drain out sewerage & rain water in Quetta

**Independent Report**  
**QUETTA:** The Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafaqat monitored the campaign continued to drain out the sewerage and rain water from different localities of Quetta city on Monday. The campaign, it may be mentioned here, the drive has been started under supervision of Commissioner and Administrator Quetta on special directives of the Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti. During the visit, the Commissioner visited different localities and inspected the post-rains situation there. Besides, he also inspected the ongoing work for draining out the rain and sewerage water. He expressed satisfaction over the performance of field teams besides appreciating functioning of the teams of PDMA. He urged the people to remain vigilant and not pay heed towards the rumors being spread in the city. He said that it is our responsibility to protect every person, and it would be fulfilled anyway.



**HUB:** Heavy machineries and laborers busy in construction work of Causeway crossing road completely destroyed after flood in Hub River during recent heavy downpour of monsoon, under supervision NHA, located on Gwadar Coastal Highway.

## Adil stands exposed after losing legal battle in UK court

**ISLAMABAD (Agencies):** Controversial YouTuber Maj @ Adil Farooq Raja has been exposed after losing a legal battle in the United Kingdom. The false narrative he constructed has also been dismantled, with the British High Court rejecting all of his claims that Pakistan is an authoritarian state where the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) controls both the judiciary and the government. He had also alleged that the February 8 general elections in Pakistan were rigged. High Court Judge Richard Spearman KC dismissed all applications made by the YouTuber, including his request to halt a defamation trial brought against him by former senior military officer Brigadier @ Rashid Naseer. The judge determined that Raja had posted seriously damaging remarks about Naseer in nine social media posts across platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and X [formerly Twitter]. Imposing a penalty on Raja, the court ordered him to pay £5,000 to the now retired brigadier for the dismissed application to halt the defamation trial. It also instructed him to make an interim payment of £5,000 towards the costs incurred for the failed security for costs application. Raja attended the court remotely via video-link, accompanied by his lawyer and PTI UK leader Mahtab Anwar Aziz, who also represents PTI activist Shayan Ali.