

# Independent

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## Pak-Uzbekistan to start work on trade corridor with Afghanistan: Uzbek Minister

### PM reiterates commitment to complete trade, connectivity projects with Uzbekistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Uzbek Deputy Minister for Transport and Aviation, Jasurbek Choriev has said that Pakistan and Uzbekistan have decided to start work on the trilateral trade corridor with Afghanistan, which is of great importance in regional economic integration.

Including Afghanistan, all three parties are willing to complete this trade corridor and its completion will increase regional trade and boost economic activities in the regional countries, Jasurbek Choriev said this at the Tashkent International Investment Forum (TIIF) while talking to APP.

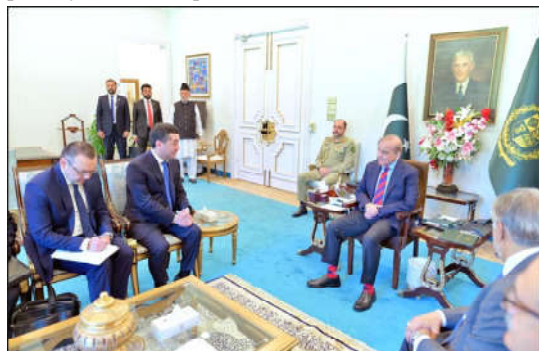
The minister said that Pakistan was our foremost priority economic partner

as well in the recent future, with which we are working in many spheres at the economic and trade level.

He said that the Pakistan-Uzbekistan partnership is of great importance in regional economic and trade integration and Uzbekistan considers Pakistan will have a significant partner in this regard.

The Minister said that Uzbekistan is the central country of Central Asia and similarly, Pakistan is also a Geo-Strategically important country of South Asia located in the neighbouring Central Asia.

He said that air, rail and road connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan is essential to increase bilateral trade between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the National Conference on Education Emergency.

## Pak-China all weather friendship

### Ahsan, Weidong hold wide-ranging discussions to solidify

BEIJING (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal met with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, Sun Weidong here on Wednesday and held wide-ranging discussions, aimed at even further solidifying the "All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership."

Discussions also included a review of successful culmination of the first decade of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the progress achieved in its second decade, especially on the five corridors, namely growth, livelihood, openness, inclusivity and innovation, as outlined by Chinese Vice Premier, He Lifeng last year. In this regard, he lauded services of Minister Planning Ahsan Iqbal as called him Mr. CPEC and noted the 5-E's framework.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan H.E. Bakhtiyor Saidov called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Speaker BA Achakzai terms 9th May incidents as heinous conspiracy against country

Independent Report  
QUETTA: The Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai has described the 9th May 2023 incidents as heinous conspiracy against the country.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, the Speaker Balochistan Assembly said that the manner attempt was made to create law and order situation on May 9 in the country was unprecedented in its history.

He said that those took part in the nefarious conspiracy on May 9 by attacking the national installations

and monuments were actually the enemies of Pakistan and nation.

He also said that it was attempt to appease the enemies by carrying out the terrorism acts.

However, the whole nation is united, and would continue to foil such kinds of conspiracies in the country, the Speaker provincial assembly maintained.

Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq said that our country is surviving because of the country's institutions.

He also condemned the character assassination of the country's institutions.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the National Conference on Education Emergency.

## Aspires highly educated Pakistan

### PM declares Education Emergency to enroll 26m out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday declared an 'Education Emergency' across Pakistan to enroll around 26 million out-of-school children and promote literacy to make the country regain its lost space and develop it as one of the most educated societies in the world.

"Today, with iron conviction, and the support of provinces, we will handle the challenge of 26 million out-of-school children. We will bring them back to school...I declare from this moment an Emergency in Education all over Pakistan...The way we did it in Punjab, we will do it in Pakistan," the prime minister said addressing the National Conference on Education Emergency.

He told the gathering of federal ministers, parliamentarians, vice-chancellors, diplomats, and development partners that he would personally supervise the programme and meet all the chief ministers, setting aside political affiliations, with a vision to march in unison, expressing the hope that the provinces too would extend their support.

"This is about our children and our future... This is a very challenging task, no doubt. But nations which had faced difficulties and defeat in the past arose from the ashes of defeat. Germany and Japan are the examples. Why can't Pakistan be? I guarantee, if we move in unison to find our space, Pakistan will emerge as one of the most educated societies one day," he remarked.

The prime minister, recounting the achievements of the Punjab Government during his chief ministership, highlighted the boosted enrollment rates, especially for girls, through initiatives like the Zevar Taleem Programme, and rescuing 90,000 boys from brick kilns to sending them to schools. He also mentioned outsourcing of 10,000 poorly performing schools to improve education quality and established Daanish Schools which offered free high-quality education and boarding for underprivileged children. The Punjab Education Endowment Fund provided scholarships to hundreds of thousands of deserving students based on merit.

He said the enrollment of 26 million out-of-school children and stunted growth were major challenges facing Pakistan which required huge financial resources. "But the real challenge is the will to do," he commented and recalled Pakistan's manifestation of the commitment to become a nuclear power despite international pressures, and eliminating terrorism by sacrificing around 80,000 lives to establish peace in the country as well as the globe.

In his address, Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said the education sector needed immediate actions and urgent responses as Pakistan stood at the crossroads of destination with no option to lose.

## President leaves for Islamabad after 3-day visit to Quetta

Independent Report  
QUETTA: The President Asif Ali Zardari left for Islamabad after completing his three-day visit to Quetta on Wednesday.

The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti saw him off at the Quetta airport.

During his stay in Quetta, the President presided over meetings on the progress of development projects and law and order in the province.

He also had meetings with the Governor and Chief Minister besides with the provincial ministers, members of assembly and leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party.

## Balochistan lawyers' leaders call for making process of judges' appointment transparent

Member PBC demands to postpone process of judges' appointment in Supreme & High courts; condemns incident of baton charge against lawyers in Lahore

Independent Report  
QUETTA: The leaders of Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) and different Balochistan Bar Associations have underlined the need to make the process of appointment of judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts.

The Member PBC pointed out that hundreds of thousands cases are pending in the courts all over the country.

More than 57,000 cases are pending in the Supreme Court only, Munir Ahmed Kakar mentioned.

He mentioned that the Chief Justice of Pakistan formed committee for amendment in the rules after the endeavours of representatives of lawyers and members of the Judicial Commission.

The Member PBC pleaded to the CJ not to make compromise on the principles.

## Governor summons BA session today

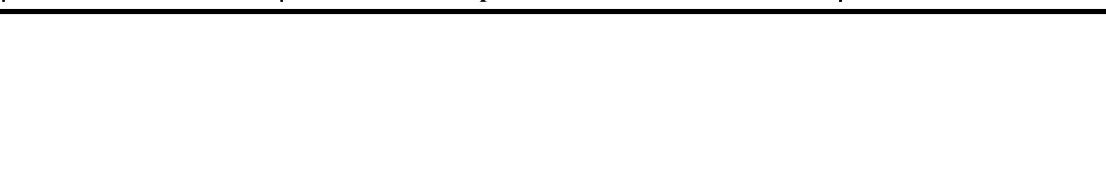
Independent Report  
QUETTA: The session of Balochistan Assembly is scheduled to be held at 11:00 AM today (Thursday) here.

According to the notification issued here by the Provincial Assembly's secretariat on Wednesday, the Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has summoned the session.

The notification mentioned that the entry of all government and private armed security guards would remain banned in the assembly's secretariat during the session.

## Anas appointed as Media Communication Strategist, CM Secretariat

Independent Report  
QUETTA: Anas Abdullah has been appointed as the Media Communication Strategist in Chief Minister Secretariat on Wednesday. This was announced in an official notification issued here. According to the notification, the competent authority has appointed Anas Abdullah as the Media Communication Strategist, Chief Minister Secretariat.



ISLAMABAD: Participants attending a seminar titled "Tahafuz e Ain e Pakistan kesy aur kiun" under the auspices of Tehreek Tahafuz Pakistan in the Federal Capital.

## Mathew Miller says: US supports Saudi crown prince's visit to Pakistan

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States of America said it encourages diplomatic engagements among its partners and supports the upcoming visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan, expected sometime this month.

The statement by State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller was issued in response to a question about diplomatic activities in the region, including Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's official tour of the South Asian state.

The Saudi crown prince's visit to Pakistan is likely to occur amid high-level exchanges between the two countries, as Islamabad seeks foreign investment to address its economic challenges.

"We always support diplomatic engagement between our partners," Miller said during a media briefing. "I don't have any further comment on the visit between the Saudi crown prince to Pakistan, but it's - that kind of diplomatic engagement is routine and something that we support and encourage."

In response to a question regarding Senator Chuck Schumer, the Majority Leader of the US Senate, had met with the Pakistani ambassador and discussed the protection of PTI leaders, including Imran Khan and if the US State Department also considers the protection of PTI leaders a top priority, Miller said that he was not aware of any such conversation between the State Department and Senator Schumer.

Miller addressed reports of Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's reported warning to Pakistan regarding the safety of Imran Khan, affirming the US commitment to human rights.



QUETTA: Representative of Germany Government Dr. Fronses cutting ribbon to inaugurate the BISP Mobile Registration Center for provision of facilities to women.

## Naqvi lauds FC North Balochistan's role for peace, development in province

QUETTA (INP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the headquarters of Frontier Corps North Balochistan today (Wednesday).

Mohsin Naqvi was welcomed by FC North IG Major General Amir Ajmal Chaudhry and saluted by troops of FC North.

Minister Naqvi paid homage to the martyrs by laying a floral wreath at the martyrs' memorial and reciting Fatihah (prayers). He paid tribute to martyrs' sacrifices for the nation.

During his tour, Minister Naqvi explored the museum and examined the latest tools utilized by FC North, showing keen interest in historical artifacts.

A special session was convened under his presidency at FC North and commended the FC North's role in maintaining peace and order in Balochistan. In his address, Minister Naqvi reiterated the pivotal contributions of FC North in ensuring the prosperity of the region.

He commended the professional capabilities and courage of the officers and young men of FC North, stating, "We are proud of their dedication to duty." Minister Naqvi underscored the patriotism of Balochistan residents, and emphasized, development and prosperity was attainable only with the prevailing peace and order. He was briefed on FC North's professional performance and responsibilities, further highlighting the organization's vital contributions to security and stability in Balochistan.



QUETTA: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi offering fateha at the Martyrs Monument during his visit to Frontier Corps Balochistan (North) Headquarters.

## State and LEAs are closely related to each other, says Governor Balochistan

Independent Report  
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has stated that the State and law enforcement agencies are closely related to each other and all national installations are our joint assets.

Moreover, there is a key role of law enforcement agencies including the armed forces in protection of the life and property of the masses besides in promoting national unity.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, the Governor said that unfortunately attack on the security institutions and public properties on May 9 last year was a condemnable act.

The Governor stressed that we should take concrete safety measures for prevention of such incidents at the government level in future.

In addition to this, he stressed to play wholehearted part for promotion of national unity and installations in order to prevent lawlessness and chaos.

## NEPRA notifies Rs 2.83 per unit hike in power tariff for March

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Wednesday notified Rs 2.83 per unit increase in power tariff for March under monthly fuel adjustment mechanism.

According to the NEPRA notification, the increase would be applicable to all the consumers categories except electric vehicle charging stations and lifeline consumers.

The said adjustment shall be shown separately in the consumers' bills on the basis of units billed to the consumers in the month of March. XWDISCOs shall reflect the fuel charges adjustment in respect of March 2024 in the billing month of May, 2024, it further said.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**  
Narcotic darkness

We have plenty of smoke with fire. Citizens, particularly parents, caught in Pakistan's grave drug problem are on edge. Despite frequent reports of police and the ANF busting drug cartels, information about legal actions against peddlers is as scant as the conviction rate. The Organised Crime Unit of Lahore has captured an international ring that provided narcotics and 'party drugs' to elite youth. These criminals — the Jordan Gang — ran a network from Central Asia, Mexico, Canada, the US and other countries, and supplied exorbitantly priced drugs in Lahore and Multan, targeting select students in academic institutions. Their modus operandi — offer deals to youngsters on the internet through fake IDs and in partnership with corrupt GPO and police officials — should be a cause of concern for the authorities. This is not the first attempt at infecting the young: last August, two security officials at the Islamic University of Bahawalpur were caught with crystal meth and offensive videos of teachers and students. The Punjab Police released an alarming report last month: some 234 police officers were involved in the drug trade across Punjab. Young people are experimental, anxious and restless, keen to dodge routine with a heady hit. Small wonder, then, that public health experts urge policymakers and law enforcement to understand that punishment-driven strategies are counterproductive. Instead, they must weed out rogue personnel and powerful groups who claim a lion's share of the profits from narcotic rackets, so that sealing supply routes, including those along a porous border, is successful. The crisis also demands awareness campaigns and collaboration among parents, NGOs and educational facilities to identify signs of addiction and provide therapy and rehabilitation. Long-term success hinges on restructured narcotic courts so that faster trials can ensure a rise in conviction levels — the latter should, ideally, match the regularity of narcotic seizures. This country cannot allow addiction to rip through society and ravage our future generations.

**Fly on Great Wall**

Shahzad Sharjeel

As our great neighbour becomes greater by the day, we are moving from being 'another brick in the wall' to nothing more than a fly on the wall — the Great Wall, that is. Geographical proximity and the mostly congenial nature of ties notwithstanding, do we really know China?

Folklore in the Gilgit-Baltistan region would have you believe that before the ancient mountain passes fell into disuse, one could run with a hot chapati and arrive on the Chinese side with the bread still warm. Exaggeration, perhaps, but the road distance between Islamabad and Tash-

kur-gan, the Chinese border town, via the Khunjerab Pass is half the distance between the federal capital and Karachi. Besides the fabled Silk Road, the Great Wall, the Xinjiang region, and the names of a few cosmopolitan centres like Beijing and Shanghai, most of us would be hard-pressed to name a couple more cities or regions.

All of it can't be blamed on the lack of curiosity on the part of China's neighbours, particularly in the subcontinent. The ebb and flow of our interest in knowing China has also been regulated by policy decisions in great Chinese capitals over the millennia. How two of the greatest civilisations on earth can live cheek by jowl and yet be barely acquainted has been discussed in detail by Shyam Saran, former diplomat and author, in his wonderfully narrated book *How China Sees India And The World*.

How the subcontinent and China have managed to remain indifferent towards each other for most of recorded history is marked by epochs of respectful distance and

epochs of self-importance bordering on disdain on the latter's part. In the first millennium, people of the Middle Kingdom regarded India with some awe as an emblem of Eastern sophistication and spirituality. In the second millennium, everything beyond the core of the Mandate of Heaven began to be considered 'barbaric'. Trade caravans through the storied Silk Road — in reality, a microcosm of routes and maritime exchanges through the ports in southern India — preceded the even more talked-about Indian export, the teachings of Lord Buddha. Monks from both sides crisscrossing the mountain passes, Central Asian steppes, sea routes, and the Tibetan plateau never outnumbered the merchants of silk, porcelain, jade, and spices. Tibet and the fight over it between the two neighbours came much later.

It's unimaginable today that Tibet, a Shangri-La wrapped in a mythical more talked-about Indian CE, extended its control to present-day Yunnan, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia, and the Mongolian People's Republic. Images of Tibet for us swing between the sublimity of Buddhist monasteries, to things as pedestrian as a plaza famous for auto parts in Karachi, and a moisturiser-cum skin-lightening agent named after snow from the roof of the world. The difficult-to-translate Arab tradition of al-wala, wal-bara (embrace the beneficial and disavow the harmful) can be seen at work during Mao's speech to the politburo in 1962, before the Indo-Chinese border war. While describing the 'one-and-a-half' prior wars between them, he declared a skirmish between a Tang dynasty diplomatic mission to India in 647 CE and a local adventurer who tried to usurp King Harsha's

throne in Kanauj a full war, whereas Timur's attack in 1398 merited only the status of a 'half war', owing to his Mongolian identity.

How interesting that a Muslim invasion against their coreligionists' rule in India, and the indiscriminate horror unleashed by the conquering hordes, is owned by another country, albeit half-heartedly because of Timur's Mongol identity. Ev—everyone outside of the Middle Kingdom, the centre of the Chinese civilisation between the Yellow and Yangtze rivers, qualified, at best, as 'half-Chinese.' This sort of accounting can also be described as 'too clever by half' or 'deed-hoshiyari', its Urdu equivalent.

The two-way influences of the Chinese and Indus-Gandhara civilisations are too numerous to list here. A few disparate ex—amples are 'Tanchoi', commonly known as the 'Banarasi' sari, which derives its name from three Gujarati artisans who travelled to Shanghai in 1856 as apprentices to one Mr Chhoi, a famous silk weaver. 'Tan' means three in Gujarati dialects, and when the weavers returned to Surat, Tanchoi was born. As demand for the fabric decreased, the artisans and their craft shifted to Banaras, and the name has stuck since. 'Zen', meaning meditation, evolved from the Sanskrit word 'dhyana'. 'Bokhara', is a variation of 'vihara', meaning monastery. Central Asia was a bastion of Bud-dh-ism before the Muslim influence. Archae-olo-g-ists like Aurel Stein called the entire Cen-tral Asian zone 'Serindia'. The affinities and irritants between Pakistan and China have been left out for another piece. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Gaza's fate**

Mahir Ali

Waking up yesterday to the news that Hamas had accepted a ceasefire proposal came as a pleasant surprise, but it did not last long. It was accompanied by reports of Israel's long-threatened infiltration into Rafah, a day after it had urged 100,000 'civilians' to evacuate a city in Gaza that has become a refuge for almost 1.5 million Palestinians.

The sector subsequently began to be pounded — presumably with ammunition supplied by the US and UK — under the apparent assumption that any Hamas operatives in the area would not have left among the tens of thousands who evacuated on foot, by vehicles or on donkey carts.

Almost every international ally of the Zionist regime has seemingly tried to talk it out of invading Rafah, yet their weapons keep flowing to Israel. Global history is peppered with instances of hypocrisy, but seldom have they been as egregious or stark as in 2024. In the past, sufficiently serious cautions from Washington have often produced the desired effect by at least temporarily reducing Israeli excesses. Benjamin Netanyahu, however, falls in a different category. Any semblance of a pause in hostilities, let alone a sustainable ceasefire, would spell his doom.

The revived demonstrations in Israeli cities are by no means dedicated to securing a ceasefire, although some of the protesters support that goal. Their demands on Gaza are somewhat more oblique, but invariably entail the return of the surviving hostages — which would inevitably involve at least a temporary cessation of hostilities. But any kind of peace, however fragile, does not suit Netanyahu. Apart from the indictments for corruption, he

presides over a regime that ignored — possibly deliberately — the clear warning signs of a Hamas assault against kibbutzim on the periphery of Gaza, populated to a considerable extent by Jews who do not buy into the narrative of exclusively Jewish nationhood.

Netanyahu and his more vicious allies are almost as contemptuous of conciliatory Jews, Israeli or otherwise, as they are of Palestinians. In their blighted vision, the Jewish students participating in protests in the US, UK or Australia are far more problematic than the goyim who can more easily be dismissed as antisemitic.

The anti-genocide protests have been spreading beyond the US to Europe and even Australia, with the encampments routinely derided by antagonistic politicians pointing out that Jewish students feel intimidated — albeit presumably not as much as children, women and men in Gaza, where the death toll since Oct 7 is approaching 35,000.

Later this week, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) is expected to vote on whether to admit Palestine as a full member, yet a probable vote overwhelmingly in favour of the proposition won't cut ice with the Security Council, where the US veto will prevail, as it has so many times whenever a challenge to Zionism has been considered.

Almost 50 years ago, in November 1974, Yasser Arafat addressed the UNGA, having arrived with his holster and an olive branch, famously declaring: "Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand". In his landmark speech, Arafat decried Zionist acts of "barbarism" and the "temerity" of the "Zionists and

colonialists ... to describe the just struggle of our people as terror".

A couple of decades before the post-Oslo Palestinian Authority he initially presided over became a handmaiden of the Zionist occupation, Arafat pointed out to the UN that "when it became obvious that the Palestinians would not recuperate one inch of Palestine through exclusively political means, our people had no choice but to resort to armed struggle".

He made no mention of a two-state solution, which is currently the favoured option among many of those who have contributed over the decades towards diminishing the possibility of such an outcome. Arafat held out a long-term hope for "one democratic state where Christian, Jew and Muslim live in justice, equality and fraternity". That remains a dead man's dream. Neither a one-state nor a two-state outcome is on the cards, and that would not change with Netanyahu's replacement by a superficially less obnoxious figurehead.

The drift towards Palestinian genocide dates back at least to 1947-48, and the resistance to it has been equally evident since then. The olive branch that Arafat brought to the UN didn't fall. It was effectively wrested from his hand. All too many olive trees have been chopped down since then, particularly after the Oslo 'process', when the trend towards illegal settlements was ramped up, backed by successive US governments. Replacing the Netanyahu regime with an equally absurd alternative would only mean that, a further 50 years hence, future generations will still be marveling at the impotence of their ancestors. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**PM directs early establishment of Pakistan Skill Company, Skill Development Fund**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to immediately initiate the process of establishing the Pakistan Skill Company and Pakistan Skill Development Fund to unify the technical and vocational education countrywide and provide better employment to

Pakistani workers abroad. The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting to review the matters of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, and National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), decided to introduce reforms in the said organisations.

He instructed to further activate the NAVTC to provide world-class technical and vocational training to the young workforce and also called for ensuring the globally renowned and international certifications in all technical fields.

The prime minister also emphasised the collaboration between the center and provinces to

elevate the quality of Pakistan's technical manpower and human resource development.

He called for establishing an integrated system of regulating the manpower equipped with the best and world-class professional technical skills.

Besides, in coordination with NADRA.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a sectoral briefing regarding NAVTC and Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain chairing a meeting of Fertilizer Review Committee.

**Fertilizer companies not to be allowed to take undue profit: Rana Tanveer**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries & Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Wednesday said that fertilizer companies must not be allowed to take undue profit. Steps should be taken to ensure uniform price of the urea fertilizer across the country for the convenience of farmers, he directed while chairing a meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee.

Besides the Federal Secretary of Industries and Production and agriculture

secretaries of the four provinces, the meeting was attended by the representatives of Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited, Engro, Fatima Fertilizer Company and Kisan Ittehad, a news release said. The minister regretted that the fertilizer companies had raised the prices of urea without realizing the plight of farmers. He asked the companies to roll back the recently increased urea prices on their own, or otherwise the government would fix the same.

**Jam Kamal urges Pakistan, Belarus trade boost: Potential yet to be fully exploited**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday stressed the need for Pakistan and Belarus to elevate their bilateral trade relations to fully exploit their potential.

Pakistan has been exporting a diverse range of goods to Belarus, including medicaments, optical/medical apparatus, rice,

leather articles, textiles, cutlery, footwear, sports requisites, cotton garments, salt, and mangoes, said a press release issued here.

However, Pakistan's imports from Belarus consist of agriculture tractors, fertilizer, wood pulp, and motor vehicles.

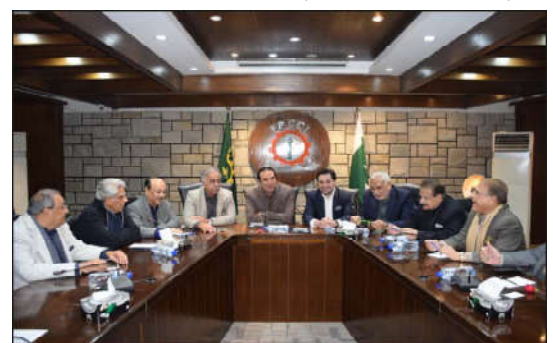
Minister Jam Kamal Khan highlighted Pakistan's significant

position as the fourth-largest dairy producer globally, suggesting that the country has the capability to become a major exporter in this sector. He urged the exploration of new avenues and potential to capitalize on this opportunity, proposing that Belarus upgrade its tractors to meet Pakistan's agricultural requirements.

**May 9th incidents condemnable, Business community stands with Pak Army: Atif Ikram**

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh has strongly condemned the events of May 9 and said that the business community stands in solidarity with the Pakistan Army. We pay tribute to the services of Pakistan forces and the proud spirit of martyrdom for Pakistan. The efforts of the Special Facilitation Council (SIFC) to bring investment to the country are commendable, he expressed these views while addressing a meeting of the business community.

President Atif Ikram said that on May 9 last year, Jinnah House, sensitive installations, damaged at the international level. The economy is badly affected by incidents like May 9,



government and private properties were vandalized and surrounded by fire, and the country's prestige was

so a plan should be made so that these incidents cannot be repeated in the future.

**Pakistan, Algeria to boost trade relation**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pakistan and Algeria agreed to further strengthen bilateral ties in diverse areas of mutual interests, particularly to boost economic ties. The two sides agreed to boost bilateral trade volume through enhancing economic activities. The notion to elevate bilateral economic ties was discussed during a visit by Dr. Ibrahim Romani, Ambassador of Algeria to Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Wednesday. During the visit, a

meeting between the visiting ambassador and RCCI officials was held in which both sides expressed strong desire to enhance trade, investment, and cultural exchange. Matters pertaining to bilateral relations, investment opportunities, trade facilitation measures, cultural exchange and tourism, diplomatic relations & economic development also came under discussion. According to details the ambassador said that his country was keen to promote trade and economic ties with Pakistan.

**PSX loses 159 points**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) Wednesday witnessed bearish trend and shed 159.38 points, a negative change of 0.22 percent, closing at 72,601.82 points against 72,761.20 points the previous trading day.

A total of 970,325,029 shares valuing Rs 23,514 billion were traded during the day as compared to 621,826,404 shares valuing Rs 24,970 billion the last day.

Some 388 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 149 of them recorded gains and 208 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 31 remained unchanged.

**IT, Telecom role vital for economic uplift: Shaza**

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation of Telecom Infrastructure Services Company

EDOTCO Group led by its Group CEO Mohamed Adlan Ahmad Tajuddin on Wednesday called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and discussed matters of mutual interest and related to Telecom infrastructure.

The other members of the delegation included Annis Sheikh Mohammed, Group CFO, Noreen Sabrina Mohd Noor, Group Head of Corporate Communications, Abdul Aziz, Country Managing Director, and Muhammad Rehan Farooqi, Director

of Corporate Affairs and Planning, said a news release.

While talking to the delegation, Shaza Fatima said that steps are being taken for digitalization in the country. She said that the present government is committed to the provision of quality broadband and Internet services to the masses. Shaza Fatima said that the IT and Telecom sector has an important role in the economic uplift of the country. She said that the Ministry of IT & Telecom was taking alongside the telecom industry, adding that issues confronting the Telecom industry will be resolved.



## CM KP launches wheat procurement process

**Independent Report**  
DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur inaugurated the wheat procurement drive in the province here on Wednesday.

Accompanied by Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru, the chief minister launched the province-wide procurement process in a ceremony held here at Provincial Reserve Center.

The chief minister was also briefed about wheat procurement and its storage-related matters.

During the briefing, it was informed that that about 600,000 metric tons wheat would be purchased

in the province under a project worth Rs 29 billion. Out of which 300,000 metric tons of wheat would be purchased from local farmers.

As part of procurement process, 40,000 metric tons of wheat would be purchased from local farmers in Dera Ismail Khan as a stock of about 10500 metric tons was already available in the district. Addressing the ceremony, the chief minister said "the payment of purchased wheat would be made within 24 hours."

He said the government was committed to the welfare of farmers and priority was being given to provision of

facilities to them. "Farmers are hardworking people so their welfare and provision of facilities to them was among our priorities," he said.

He emphasized that transparency and quality assurance as core principles of the procurement process and in this regard, he added, effective measures had been made.

"Not buying wheat from Pakistan Agricultural Storage & Services Corporation Limited (PASSCO) resulted in a benefit of Rs 12 billion which would be utilized in the construction and maintenance of warehouses," he said.



**LAHORE:** Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique chairing the fourth meeting of the Sub-Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, held at the home department.

## PHC issues notices in suspension of Mashal advocacy license case

**PESHAWAR (APP):** A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asad Ullah on Wednesday heard a petition challenging the suspension of advocacy license of Advisor to the Chief Minister for Social Welfare, Mashal Yousafzai by the PHC Bar.

The counsel for the petitioner, Qazi Anwar told the bench that on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, police allegedly maltreated Advocate Alamzab at the gate of PHC and the same was highlighted by the petitioner Mashal on social media as a witness of the incident. Following her post, he said, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council suspended the license of Mashal Yousafzai, adding that on a request of the petitioner, Chairman KP Bar Council reinstated her license however, the KP Bar filed an application with Pakistan Bar Council that again suspended her license. The Chief Justice inquired whether the language used in the post was appropriate for a lawyer? Advocate Qazi Anwar replied in negative and said he had already denounced the language of the post.

## CM takes notice of schoolteacher torture

**LAHORE (APP):** Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken note of a torture incident, committed against a teacher at the Government High School 9/95 L, Sahiwal.

She sought a report from Commissioner Sahiwal in this regard and ordered for arrest of the accused at the earliest.

The CM ordered to provide the best medical treatment facilities to the injured schoolteacher. She strongly condemned the attack, committed by boys on their teacher. She said, "Attack being perpetrated on a schoolteacher is unacceptable under any circumstance."

## Punjab CM reviews health reforms

**LAHORE (APP):** Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif presided over a special meeting to review health reforms, here on Wednesday.

The chief minister expressed her dismay over the previous government not paying any attention to the public health issues. She expressed her severe indignation over the loss of Rs. 4 billion caused to the government exchequer in the Murree hospital project. The meeting decided that legal action would be taken against those who caused huge losses to the government exchequer by delaying the project. The CM said it was highly heart-rending and deplorable to impede provision of health facilities to people during the

previous government's tenure. "It is our duty to safeguard people's money and we cannot permit its loss. We want to establish state-of-the-art health facilities for people in every district. We will provide high quality treatment facilities to the common man."

The proposal to establish a medical college with the help of public-private partnership in Attock, Mianwali, Vehari, Bhakkar and Jhelum was reviewed. A comprehensive briefing was given on the construction, rehabilitation of hospitals: 'Clinic on Wheels', free medicines and other matters, along with undertaking health reforms and other affairs were reviewed during the meeting.



**FAISALABAD:** Chairman Ulema Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addressing a press conference.

## CM's directive prompts relocation of mother and children to welfare center

**Independent Report**  
**PESHAWAR:** On the directives from Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, the district administration has relocated a mother and her kids to social welfare rehabilitation center after a video surfaced on social media depicting them sleeping in pathetic conditions along the roadside.

Under the supervision of the Child Protection and Welfare Commission and Social Welfare Department, a rescue operation was conducted at Kareem Pura Bazaar. The woman and children were subsequently shifted to a social welfare rehabilitation center. The viral video showed the woman and her children begging in the city's markets, with the children lying on the footpath.



**GILGIT:** Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad Advocate addressing during Red Cross/Red Crescent Day celebration.

## Health minister leads efforts to ensure peace, order across province

**LAHORE (APP):** Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said the government will ensure peace and order throughout the province.

He was chairing the fourth meeting of the Sub-Cabinet Committee on Law and Orders, held at the home department here on Wednesday, on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

The minister paid tribute to the Punjab policemen, who were injured while fighting the enemies of law and order.

## Dacoits killed innocent person due to nonpayment of ransom money

**SHIKARPUR:** An other shameful incident occurred in Shikarpur District in which dacoits throw the tortured dead body of one innocent kidnapped elderly person of Rawalpindi on Wednesday.

According to initial reports reached here that one dead body identified as Agha Sohail of 70 resident of Rawalpindi was found from katcha area of 26 Mail in the jurisdiction of Naparkot police station on Wednesday and the villagers informed the area police about a dead body lying on side of Irrigation Canal there.

Area police with the help of villagers transported the dead body of deceased to Taluka Hospital Khanpur for Medico Legal formalities. The driving license of deceased elderly person was found from place, area police added. Similarly it came to know from local sources that the elderly person was kidnapped by the outlaws few months ago and the kidnapers after brutally torturing on him killed him when the family of deceased innocent elderly person failed to pay the Ransom Money to the dacoits.

## Mariyum Aurangzeb orders swift completion of CM's 33 special projects

**LAHORE (APP):** Senior Provincial Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb has issued directions for swift completion of Punjab chief minister's 33 special projects, and prioritising health development initiatives on an urgent basis.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, she said that according to the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, seven mega projects in the health sector, worth Rs. 145 billion, were nearing completion. She disclosed that the first phase of the Nawaz Sharif Cancer Institute in Lahore would be completed in a year, while the opening of the

## US Consul General visits FF Steel

**PESHAWAR (APP):** US Consul General, Shante Moore visited FF Steel in Peshawar on Wednesday to reinforce bilateral trade and investment ties between the US and Pakistan.

During his visit, he met with the senior management team, and praised FF Steel's contributions to Pakistan's economy. FF Steel is one of Pakistan's leading steel manufacturers, known for producing high-quality steel products and investing in research and development. The visit is expected to further enhance economic cooperation between the two countries, which already have a strong bilateral trade relationship with nearly \$2.08 billion in trade in 2023.

# International News

## Putin tells the West: Russia will talk only on equal terms

**Monitoring Desk**  
**MOSCOW:** Vladimir Putin has been 'honoured', in similar fashion to a 'Russian tsar' from the country's past. During his swearing-in for a fresh six-year term as Russia's President, Putin had a double-edged message for the West: "the Kremlin is ready to talk but Russia is girding for victory in Ukraine".

Putin, rose to the senior-most position at the Kremlin only eight years after the fall of the Soviet Union. He is now set to overtake Josef Stalin and effectively become Russia's longest-serving ruler since 'Empress Catherine the Great', should he complete the term.

The 71-year-old, who is also former KGB 'spy' exuded confidence

in the carefully choreographed inauguration. The West and his opponents (who are mainly in jail or abroad) cast this as 'a fig leaf of democracy', 'covering a corrupt Russian autocracy'.

As the Russian elite waited in the Hall of Saint Andrew within the Grand Kremlin Palace (where the imperial throne once sat), Putin dissected documents in his office. After this, he walked down the corridors of the Kremlin saluting guards and even stopped to 'leisurely' study a picture on the wall.

"We do not refuse dialogue with Western states," Putin stated after being sworn in. He added that he was ready for talks on 'security and strategic stability' but only on the condition that there was no "ar-

rogance" on the part of the United States and its allies.

Russia's chief (of more than 24 years) promised "victory" and said all Russians were now "answerable to our thousand-year history and our ancestors." He departed from the ceremony to the music "Hail" from Mikhail Glinka's opera "A Life for the Tsar". The words "Hail, hail, my Rus! Hail you are my Russian land" rang out in the Kremlin. The original words are "Hail, hail, our Russian tsar!".

"The authority of our president is higher than ever, higher than the American president, higher even than the Russian tsar. So much depends on our president" said Gennady Zyuganov (a leader of the Communist Party).



**Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.**

## Israel seizes Rafah crossing amid global outcry

**Monitoring Desk**  
**RAFAH:** Israel sent tanks into Rafah in southern Gaza, seizing control of the border crossing with Egypt on Tuesday, an operation the UN said denied it access to the key humanitarian passage.

The military's thrust into the eastern sector of the city packed with displaced civilians came with negotiators and mediators due in Cairo in the latest effort towards a prisoner release and ceasefire in the

## John Swinney elected as Scotland's new leader

**Monitoring Desk**  
**LONDON:** Scotland got its second leader in as many years on Tuesday, as parliament approved political veteran John Swinney to lead the country as first minister.

Swinney, 60, succeeds Humza Yousaf, who formally resigned from the role earlier in the day, following his announcement last week that he would step down after just over a year in charge. Yousaf, 39, announced his resignation last Monday before a confidence vote in the Scottish parliament that he was set to lose, having ditched his junior coalition partners, the Scottish Green Party.

## Italy PM Meloni in Libya to sign cooperation deals

**Monitoring Desk**  
**TRIPOLI:** Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni began a visit to Libya on Tuesday to sign cooperation agreements, and was set to meet leaders from rival administrations in the conflict-torn country. Accompanied by a ministerial delegation on her second visit to Libya since taking office in October 2022, Meloni met the head of the Tripoli-based government, Abdelhamid Dbeibah, Libyan officials said. "Declarations of intent" were due to be signed on cooperation in health,

## Brazil polls show mixed scenario for Lula's approval ratings

**Monitoring Desk**  
**SAO PAULO:** Brazilian opinion polls released this week show a mixed scenario for the approval ratings of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's administration, with two surveys indicating a decline while a third one sees an improvement.

Approval of his government fell to 33% in May from 35% in February, a Genial/Quaest poll showed.

## 3 policemen killed in bomb attack in northeastern Afghanistan

**Monitoring Desk**  
**KABUL:** Three policemen were killed and five were wounded on Wednesday when a sticky bomb was detonated next to a security convoy tasked with clearing illegal poppy crops in northeastern Afghanistan, the interior ministry said.

The improvised explosive device (IED) was attached to a motorcycle which targeted a convoy of police vehicles in Faizabad, the capital of mountainous Badakhshan province, around 11am local time.

"The bomb exploded while the convoy of police forces was on its way to destroy poppy cultivation," Taliban Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Mateen Qani posted on X.

The explosion comes days after Taliban security officials and residents clashed over the violent clearance of poppy crops in two Badakhshan districts, leaving two dead and sparking rare protests.

Afghanistan was the largest producer of opium before poppy cultivation was banned in a decree by the Taliban supreme leader in April 2022.

Farmers have been encouraged to plant different crops, but none compete with the financial draw of the poppy, leading some to continue discreetly cultivating small plots.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

An AFP journalist saw Taliban authorities searching homes and detaining dozens of people near the scene.

## Russia hits Ukraine's power grid with a 'massive' attack on a day marking the WWII defeat of Nazism

**Monitoring Desk**  
**KYIV:** Russian forces unleashed a nighttime barrage of more than 50 cruise missiles and explosive drones at Ukraine's power grid Wednesday, targeting a wide area in what President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called a "massive" attack on the day the country celebrates the defeat of Nazism in World War II.

The bombardment blasted targets in seven Ukrainian regions, including the Kyiv area and parts of the south and west, damaging homes and the country's rail network, authorities said. Three people, including an 8-year-old girl, were injured, according to officials.

Russia has repeatedly pounded Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the war that is stretching into its third year and has claimed thousands of lives. By taking out the power, the



**German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy shake hands at a press conference in Berlin, Germany.**

## Philippine military chief accuses China of 'malign influence effort'

**Monitoring Desk**  
**MANILA:** The Philippines' military chief accused China of a "malign influence effort" on Wednesday, after a local newspaper reported a Filipino vice admiral had made a deal with Beijing to de-escalate tensions in the South China Sea. The Manila Times published what it said was a transcript of a phone conversation during which it

said a Philippine admiral had agreed to China's proposal of a "new model", where the Philippines would use fewer vessels in resupply missions to troops at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, and notify Beijing about missions in advance. Reuters has not heard the reported phone conversation and could not verify the contents of the published transcript.

## UK will expel Russian defence attache over 'malign activity'

**Monitoring Desk**  
**LONDON:** Britain will expel Russia's defence attache, remove diplomatic status from some properties and limit the length of Russian diplomatic visas in response to what interior minister James Cleverly called Moscow's "malign activity".

Addressing parliament on Wednesday, Cleverly said Britain was already "an extremely challenging operating environment for Russian intelligence services" but the measures would "only serve to strengthen our resilience to the Russian threat".

Britain has introduced several waves of sanctions on Russian companies and individuals since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and Cleverly said the Conservative government would not falter in its support of Kyiv.





QUETTA: President Asif Ali Zardari being seen off by the Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti at the conclusion of his official visit to Quetta.

## 9th May to be remembered as a dark day in Pakistan's history: President Zardari

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has said that 9th May 2023, will always be remembered as a dark day in Pakistan's history when a politically instigated mob ran amok across the country, damaging public property and military installations.

Condemning the violence, he said that the unfortunate incidents severely tarnished the country's image, which only served the interests of Pakistan's enemies.

The president, in his message, termed the mob attacks an attempt to challenge the writ of the state, undermine the rule of law and weaken the institutions.

He said that peaceful demonstrations and constructive criticism were the

essence of democracy, emphasizing that Pakistan's Constitution enshrined the fundamental rights of assembly and expression.

Nonetheless, he stressed the vital importance of exercising "these rights with utmost responsibility, adhering strictly to the bounds of constitutional and legal provisions".

He affirmed that any attempt to misuse "these rights to incite violence will never be tolerated. We have never seen such vandalism in responsible democracies, with violent mobs wreaking havoc on state properties for political gains."

The president expressed pride in Pakistan's Armed Forces and its institutions, which had been a vanguard in defending the nation against various

threats. He emphasised that those responsible for the May 9 violence should be held accountable according to the law.

President Zardari observed that Pakistan faced numerous challenges, and such irresponsible acts by political forces not only hindered the progress achieved as a nation but further exacerbated socio-economic challenges. "The current political situation demands that all political parties work towards promoting tolerance, democratic values, and political dialogue, and provide a clear direction to the nation."

The president urged political parties, the Parliament, the media, and civil society to strengthen democracy by upholding the rule of law.



QUETTA: Provincial Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Lango listening the problems of the people in his office.

## Govt striving to improve quality of education in Balochistan: Raheela

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Education Minister Raheela Hameed Durrani on Wednesday said that provincial government was taking steps to improve quality of education through elimination of cheating culture from examination centers.

She expressed these views while talking to Chairman Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Mir Ijaz Azeem Baloch while visiting various ongoing intermediate examination centers in respective areas of Quetta City. She said that cheating in examinations was a scourge which all stakeholders have a joint responsibility to eradicate the source of copying culture from the province because standard of education was essential for development of the province.

The current government was trying to implement transparent examination process in the province in an efficient manner, she

noted and added that in the light of the special instructions of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, steps were being taken to prevent copying in the examination centers across the province.

The minister said that the best arrangements were being made to prevent cheating in the exams saying that you could pass the exam by copying but you could not get the qualification, students, teachers and parents have to play their role to prevent copying culture. Earlier, the Provincial Education Minister attended the ceremony held to honour the students who secured prominent positions in the examinations last year. On this occasion, she said that students should keep one thing in their minds for the rest of their lives that what was written as it was not written on degree so be friendly with books and spend your free time reading books, it would increase your knowledge.

## President approves appointment of Rubina Khalid as BISP Chairperson

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari Wednesday approved the appointment of Rubina Khalid as Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

He also accepted the resignation of Dr Amjad Saqib from his position as Chairperson, a press release issued by the President House said.

The president approved the appointment under Section 5(3) of the Benazir Income Support Programme Act 2010.

## Ministry confirms moon unseen, Ziqad to begin May 10

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Wednesday announced that the moon of Ziqad 1445 AH has not been sighted. Following the directive of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee.



Chairman NAB Lt Gen (ret'd) Nazir Ahmed, DG NAB (Balochistan) Izbah Ahmed Awan and Incharge NAB Sub Office Gwadar Dr. Muhammad Rashid addressing the audience during inaugural ceremony of NAB Sub Office Gwadar.

## Fareeda posted as DC Sohbatpur: Another female civil officer gets posting as DC in Balochistan

Independent Report QUETTA: Yet another female civil officer belonging to Balochistan got posting as Deputy Commissioner in Balochistan province.

The officer of Balochistan Civil Service, Ms. Fareeda Tareen (BS-18), awaiting posting orders in the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD), has been posted as the Deputy Commissioner Sohbatpur.

It may be mentioned here that Ms. Fareed Tareen is the fifth lady civil officer to be appointed as Deputy Commissioner in a district of the province.

Prior to his posting, four female officers have been performing as Deputy

## Polio virus detected in four environmental samples

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Institute of Health (NIH) said on Wednesday that four new environmental samples had tested positive for wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1), bringing the total number of positive samples this year to 112.

The four new samples were collected from Karachi and Pishin district in Balochistan province, and were genetically linked to the imported YB3A cluster of WPV1. This cluster had been responsible for all positive samples and two human cases reported in Pakistan this year, private news channels reported. The NIH warned that the virus posed a significant threat to children under the age of five.

## Pakistan, World Bank agree to New Partnership Framework for reforms, development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and the World Bank on Wednesday agreed to collaborate on a new, robust and ambitious Country Partnership Framework (CPF) to carry forward the country's reform and development agenda.

The agreement was reached during a meeting between Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and a delegation led by Regional Vice President of the World Bank for South Asia Martin Raiser.

Welcoming Martin Raiser, Prime Minister Shehbaz lauded the contribution of the World Bank to the development of Pakistan.

The prime minister

appreciated the support extended by the Bank for building the climate resilient infrastructure in the wake of 2022 floods in Pakistan. He briefed the delegation on the reform agenda of the government including digitalization of the entire tax system, power sector reforms, enhancing per acre yield in the agriculture sector, addressing the issue of child stunting, etc.

Appreciating Pakistan's aggressive reforms agenda, Martin Raiser said the World Bank was ready to collaborate with the country in its journey of transformation of the economy aimed at sustainable development.

Both sides agreed to

engage in a long-term, focused partnership under a new Country Partnership Framework with an annual review mechanism to assess progress and ensure that results are achieved. The strategy will include flexibility for future course correction. The new partnership will have the ambition to achieve transformational impacts over a decade on a selective set of critical development priorities for Pakistan.

The initial set of priorities that were discussed in the meeting included structural economic reforms including domestic resource mobilization, particularly via digitalization and tax policy reforms.



ISLAMABAD: Country Representative of World Bank Najib Benhassine and Secretary Economic Affairs Division Dr. Kazim Niazi sign a joint communiqué on Mutual Cooperation between World Bank and the Government of Pakistan, in the presence of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## CDWP recommends three projects worth Rs126bn to NEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Central Development Working Party has recommended three projects of 126 billion rupees to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council for approval.

The recommendation were given in a meeting chaired by Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan in Islamabad today.

The first project is the improvement, up gradation and widening of Jaglot -

Skardu Road worth 33270.600 million rupees, referred to ECNEC for further consideration.

Secondly, the project of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of N-5 from Moro to Ranipur worth 57,245.400 million rupees referred to ECNEC for further consideration. The project shall be financed through Special Financing in the Form of Flood Emergency Loan from Asian Development Bank amounting to 150 million dollars.

## PM calls special cabinet meeting to declare May 9 as 'Black Day'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to call a special cabinet meeting tomorrow (Thursday) to declare May 9 as a 'Black Day' due to the vandalism of the opposition party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on this day last year.

The special meeting of the federal cabinet presided by PM Shehbaz Sharif will be held in the Parliament House on Thursday.

In the meeting, the sources said the Prime Minister would give a special message to the nation on the May 9 incidents from the forum of the federal cabinet.

## Investiture ceremony of Peshawar Corps held

RAWALPINDI (PR): Investiture ceremony of Peshawar Corps was held today. Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat was Chief Guest on the occasion. Awards of Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military), Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military), and Tamgha-i-Basalat were conferred on Army officers and soldiers.

Next of Kin of 4 Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and 29 Soldiers received Tamgha-i-Basalat on behalf of Shuadhas. 5 officers were awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and 15 officers were awarded Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military) for rendering meritorious services to the nation.

A large number of senior Army officers and families of awardees attended the ceremony.

## Edotco delegation visits PTA

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Major General (R) Hafeez Ur Rehman met with Edotco delegation to discuss the role of the company in the purview of recent advancements in Pakistan's telecommunication sector. The delegation was led by Mr. Mohamed Adlan Ahmad Tajuddin, Group CEO.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed Edotco's future plans for strengthening connectivity infrastructure in Pakistan and investment opportunities available in the local market to further boost digital transformation of the country.

## Walk-a-cause held on World Thalassaemia Day in Quetta

Independent Report QUETTA: The walk-a-cause was organized by Fatimid Foundation Quetta chapter marking the World Thalassaemia Day here in the premises of Balochistan Institute of Nephro-Urology Quetta (BINUQ) here on Wednesday.

The Head of Fatimid Foundation and former caretaker Provincial Minister for Health, Dr. Ameer Muhammad Khan Jogezei led the walk arranged for the cause of creating much needed awareness among general public about prevention of thalassaemia disease.

The health experts as well as patients including children suffering from thalassaemia disease and

their parents also participated in the walk.

Dr. Ameer Muhammad Jogezei and other experts underlined the need to create awareness about prevention of the blood disease among children.

They said that the thalassaemia disease is rising with passage of time, however, it can easily be prevented if the preventive measures are adopted in advance.

They said that a simple health check up for Thalassaemia carrier status before starting a family can save the children from becoming a patient of the Thalassaemia major, unending cycle of injections, suffering and misery.



QUETTA: Secretary Health Balochistan Abdullah Khan presides over the online meeting to review progress of MSs of various hospitals in Districts.



QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary Excise & Taxation Muhammad Khan Lehri meeting with Balochistan Governor Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

## 11 Hajj flights carrying 2,160 Pakistani pilgrims to land in Madinah today

MADINAH AL MUNAWARA (APP): Marking the launch of a regular month-long pre-Hajj flight operation, 11 flights are scheduled to arrive in Madinah on Thursday from five major cities from Pakistan, carrying approximately 2,160 intending Hajj pilgrims.

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, and requires every adult Muslim to undertake the journey to the holy Islamic sites in Makkah at least once in their lifetime, if they are financially and physically able.

These flights will transport pilgrims from Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Multan, and Peshawar to the Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz International

Airport (Madinah Airport), beginning a massive influx of devotees from Pakistan and other parts of the world.

Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy will visit Islamabad and Karachi airports, operated under the Road to Makkah initiative, to bid farewell to Pakistani Hajj pilgrims bound for the holy land. The pilgrims will be received by authorities concerned at the Pakistan Consulate General and the Hajj Mission of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The pre-Hajj flight operation, which will continue until June 10, will facilitate the arrival of thousands of pilgrims in the holy city. Five airlines - Pakistan International Airlines,

## Whole nation stands by security institutions against May 9 like incidents: Ghazala Gola

Independent Report QUETTA: The Deputy Speaker of Balochistan Assembly, Ms Ghazala Gola has stated that the incidents like May 9 are condemnable and the whole nation are united and standing by their security institutions against these incidents.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, the national installations and important monuments were attacked by a specific group on May 9 last year, which is strongly condemnable.

She said that it was attack on the nation and sovereignty of the country. The Deputy Speaker said that we were standing with our institutions and

would continue to stand by them in future.

He said that as a nation, we value the services and sacrifices of the institutions. We don't allow anyone to target those who sacrificed their lives for the country and nation, she added.

She stressed to take immediate and decisive action against the criminals.

Ms Ghazala Gola also stressed that all political leaders must make pledge to play their role for stability and peace in the country.

We should also support each other for development and stability of the country, she maintained.

## Lashkari Raisani donates 200 books to Quaid Library

QUETTA (APP): Former Senator and Tribal Chief Haji Lashkari Raisani generously announced to donate 200 books to the recently restored Quaid-e-Azam Library Ziarat, which had been closed for 17 years. Talking to APP, the senator Lashkari lauded the efforts of Deputy Commissioner Ziarat Hamood-ur-Rehman for restoring the historic library in its original architecture.

"To support the cause, Balochistan Peace Forum will send 200 books for the bibliophiles," he re-

marked. He said that under his supervision, Balochistan Peace Forum has been formed that strives for revising the book reading culture in the country.

"So far, as many as 75000 books have been gifted to different institutions and libraries, with ongoing efforts to continue this initiative. Expressing concern over the decline of book reading culture in society, Senator Raisani urged the youth to embrace knowledge for its intrinsic value, rather than merely pursuing degrees.



QUETTA: Dy Speaker Balochistan Assembly Madam Ghazala Gola meeting with Speaker Balochistan Assembly Capt (ret'd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai.

## PTI's penchant for baseless allegations and stirring controversy: Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said on Wednesday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has a penchant for baseless allegations and a tendency to stir controversies.

Speaking to a private news channel, he said that PTI has resorted to inconsistent statements and actions over the past years.

He said that PTI's actions have detrimental effects on state institutional integrity and public discourse.

He said that PTI leaders have been making contradictory statements on various national and political issues.

While they speak of dialogue, they simultaneously indulge in baseless accusations, tarnishing the reputation of our institutions, he added.

Responding to a question about the potential for dialogue with PTI, he said, "We are open to dialogue, but certain conditions must be to make it productive".



GENEVA: Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik being the chair of incumbent Asia Pacific Region of INSARAG presided the UN INSARAG, steering group meeting in Geneva.