

# Independent

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Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan receiving a high-level Saudi business delegation upon its arrival.

## Pak-Saudi investment conference to be held today Saudi trade delegation arrives Pakistan for mutual investment cooperation

50-member delegation aims to explore various avenues of trade and investment between the two countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 50-member high-level Saudi trade delegation led by the Deputy Investment Minister of Saudi Arabia, Ibrahim Al-Mubarak, arrived here on Sunday with the aim of exploring various avenues of trade and investment to further strengthen and promote bilateral relations between the two countries.

Upon their arrival at Noor Khan Air Base, the Saudi dignitaries were welcomed by Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Petroleum Minister Musadik Masood Malik, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce. Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan highlighted that the three-day visit of the Saudi delegation geared towards enhancing trade relations between investors from both countries and identifying trade and investment opportunities across various sectors of Pakistan's economy.

He said that the Ministry had selected numerous Pakistani companies in relevant sectors for Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings with their Saudi counterparts, adding that leading Pakistani companies would collaborate with 30 Saudi companies across different sectors.

The B2B meetings will specifically target sectors such as agriculture, mining, human resources, energy, chemicals and maritime. Moreover, discussions will extend to investment prospects in other sectors including refinery, IT, religious tourism, telecom, aviation, construction, water and power generation, he said.

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## Deputy PM, VC Zheng express determination to complete CPEC projects



ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar and Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress of China Zheng Jianbang on Sunday expressed their determination to complete all China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and further upgrade this cooperation to achieve shared objectives.

During a meeting on the sidelines of the 15th OIC Islamic Summit Conference in Banjul, The Gambia, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister reiterated Pakistan's firm support to China's core issues and underscored the importance of enhanced mutually productive ties through close economic collaboration and cooperation. Vice Chairman Zheng Jianbang reaffirmed China's support to Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and development, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

## Naila summits Makalu to become first Pak woman to ascend 11,800m peaks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Naila Kiani has achieved another historic milestone when on Sunday she successfully summited Makalu, the 5th highest peak in the world at 8,485 meters.

According to information received here, Naila ascended the peak at approximately 8:50 am Pakistan time.

This remarkable feat also makes her the first Pakistani woman to have summited this incredibly difficult mountain. Naila in a statement thanked all the nation for the prayers and good wishes. She also thanked Sherpa Gelgen Dai from Imagine Nepal, who supported her every step of the way, making the achievement possible.

This latest success highlights Naila's exceptional endurance and determination. Naila is a remarkable Pakistani woman, known for her achievements as a high-altitude mountaineer. She holds the distinction of being the first Pakistani woman to climb eleven of the world's highest peaks, all of which are above 8,000 meters.

## PML-N invites PPP to join coalition Govt

ISLAMABAD (INP): The PML-N has again contacted the People's Party to join the coalition government. According to media reports, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has contacted via mutual friends inviting the PPP to join the government.

The PPP sources said that the PML-N has requested the party to join the government prior to the next budget. "The challenges faced by the country could not be tackled by a single political party," PML-N said. "We want to guide the country out of the crises by joining hands with the PPP," ruling party said in its message.

"The PML-N intends to present the budget along with the People's Party", sources said. The ruling party has also asked the PPP to submit its budget proposals as partner in the government.

According to party sources, the PPP didn't yet convey its answer to those who brought the message.

## PKI announces protest march towards Lahore on May 10

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) announced to hold march from Multan to Lahore on March 10 to register their concerns and protest regarding the wheat issue.

While holding press conference here Sunday, Chairman Pakistan Kissan Ittehad Khalid Khokhar stated that the march would be attended by thousands of the peasants. He added that farmers would join protest march with their families, tractor trolleys, and animals. The protest will continue till imposition of

agriculture emergency in the province, he said.

About the agriculture emergency, he stated that government would have to announce start of wheat purchase, low electricity tariff and decrease in Urea fertilizer prices. About recent wheat crisis, he alleged that decision was based on corrupt practices.

When a bumper stock was available in the country, there was no need to import wheat, he added. He called for punishment to the persons involved in the mega scandal.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan in a meeting with Federal Minister for Communication Abdul Aleem Khan at CM Secretariat.

## Pakistan urges OIC states to get united for ceasefire in Gaza

Deputy PM voices Pakistan's deep concern over Israeli brutal military onslaught against Palestinians; Reiterates need for peace talks to resume, condemns India's anti-Pakistan rhetoric and Islamophobic narratives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday expressed Pakistan's deep concern over Israel's ongoing brutal military onslaught against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. In the backdrop of the genocide of Palestinians and atrocities of Israeli forces, he urged the OIC Member States to work together for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and uninterrupted humanitarian assistance to the besieged Palestinians.

Addressing the 15th Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit Conference in Banjul, the capital of The Gambia, he also expressed Pakistan's support for Palestine's admission as a full member of the UN, resumption of the peace process for realization of the two-State solution and establishment of a viable, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

Highlighting Indian atrocities in Indian Illegally Oc-

cupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), especially after India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister urged the OIC to implement its Action Plan on Jammu and Kashmir; demand that India ends all human rights violations; release Hurriyat leaders; and reverse its illegal demographic and other unilateral laws.

He appreciated the OIC for its principled support for the Kashmir cause and requested the OIC member countries to use their influence for urgent resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute as per relevant UN Security Council and the OIC resolutions.

Condemning the rising trend of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims in various parts of the world, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister urged the OIC to formulate a joint strategy to work with global social media platforms to harmonize their application of content regulation policies for blasphemous, anti-Islamic and Islamophobic content.



BANJUL: Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar addressing 15th OIC Islamic Summit Conference.

## President to arrive in Quetta on two-day visit today



QUETTA (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari will arrive in Quetta on his maiden after becoming the president tomorrow Monday.

As per details, the president is scheduled to meet the chief minister, governor of Balochistan and other political and tribal leaders. President Zardari will also participate in the oath taking ceremony of governor Balochistan and a high level meeting during his visit to Quetta.

## PM felicitates Sadiq Khan on his re-election as Mayor of London

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday congratulated Sadiq Khan on his election as Mayor of London for the third consecutive term.

The prime minister offered his heartfelt felicitations to the newly elected Mayor Sadiq Khan 'on his hat trick', PM Office Media Wing said in a press release issued here.

As a hard-working British Pakistani, he not only raised the head of his parents high but also made every Pakistani to rejoice his victory with pride, he further observed.

## Two banned TTP terrorists killed in Rawalpindi CTD encounter

RAWALPINDI (INP): Two terrorists of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed in firefighting with officials of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Rawalpindi.

According to the spokesman CTD, during the firing, the two most wanted terrorists were killed by their own accomplices. Both terrorists were involved in the attack on Dolphin Force in Rawalpindi as a result of which a young cop of Dolphin Force was martyred, said spokesman CTD.

## CM Maryam, Korean envoy discuss possible avenues of mutual coop. in different fields

Independent Report

LAHORE: "We want to benefit from Korean technology for industrial development," said Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in a meeting with the ambassador of Republic of Korea to Pakistan H.E. Park Kijun, in order to discuss possible avenues of mutual cooperation in different fields. Emphasizing on the need to promote bilateral cooperation, she said, "We will welcome Korean partnership in electronics, automobiles and information technology."

Madam Chief Minister highlighted, "Punjab also has a huge investment potential in agriculture and mining. We



intend to learn from Korean expertise in agriculture to increase our per acre crop yield." She added, "Bilateral trade volume with Korea should also increase further, as we have great export opportunities in woven cotton and cotton yarn textile."

The Korean Ambassador congratulated Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on assuming charge of office as the first female Chief Minister of the Punjab.

## Aimal Wali elected ANP's Central President; Asfandyar as Leader of Movement

PESHAWAR (APP): Senator Aimal Wali Khan was unanimously elected as the Central President of Awami National Party while party chief Asfandyar Wali Khan as the Leader of the Party's Movement in intra-party elections followed by the Party's Central Council meeting, presided over by Chairman Central Election Commission Mian Ifikhar Hussain here Sunday.

Former Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti suggested the name of Senator Aimal Wali Khan for the presidency and all members of the Central Council approved it.

Senator Daud Khan will be the Central Senior Vice President while Dr. Muhammad Saleem Khan will be the Secretary General.

Jawad Khattak will be the Vice President while Ifat Kalsoom will be the Lady Vice President for Islamabad. Pervez Khan (Swabi) from Pakhtunkhwa will be the Vice President while Dr. Noorjahan will be lady Vice President. Faridullah Damar will be the Vice President while Salmi Kakar will be the female Vice President for Balochistan.

## PTI founder working on foreign agenda to destabilise country: Rana Tanveer

NARANG MANDI (INP): Federal Minister for Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain has said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder is working on the foreign agenda to destabilise the country.

Speaking to media, the senior PML-N leader said the PTI founder staged a sit-in in 2014 to weaken the country's economy.

LOS ANGELES (INP): Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, Masood Khan has said that one should not underestimate Pakistan as it is a country with a future and moving fast to become the next tech hub of the region.

He said, "There has been exponential growth in our tech industry in past few years. Our economy is being digitized and we have unleashed a series of reforms not only to facilitate businesses but also to make them hugely profitable."

The Ambassador went on to say, "We will succeed because of our national determination; the support from Pakistani diaspora and the backing from our friends like the United



States." This was remarked by Ambassador Masood Khan while talking to US business leaders, entrepreneurs, bankers and professionals from Los Angeles during his series of inter-

actions with business community and their leaders. Talking to President Los Angeles Area Chambers Ms. Maria S. Salinas, the Ambassador to US highlighted that Pakistan was already hosting some

eighty American enterprises, mostly Fortune 500, that included Pepsi, Coca-Cola, General Electric, Abbot, Procter and Gamble, Pfizer, Honeywell, Oracle, Microsoft, Dell, IBM, Caterpillar, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, and Domino's Pizza. "They find our market rewarding," he observed.

"We want US companies to scale up their investments in Pakistan," he added. LA Area chamber is the biggest chamber of commerce in California. The Chamber has been a champion for the business community for 136 years now and has more than 1400 companies as members

across 35 sectors.

Highlighting multi-billion Gulf investment in Pakistan, the Ambassador invited US business community to join hands with Gulf nations and form tri-lateral partnership for fully reaping dividends being offered by Pak economy.

Inviting President LA Area Chambers of Commerce to visit Pakistan and also to encourage US business leaders, he observed that positive perception after their visit will build confidence.

The Ambassador also proposed sister city partnership between Los Angeles and Karachi to provide a framework for enhanced economic interactions.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Hasty transition**

Out of nowhere, the government has launched a new cybercrime authority: the National Cyber Crimes Investigation Agency. This move to replace the FIA's cybercrime wing raises substantial concerns about the motive behind it.

The NCCIA is mandated to handle offences under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, which, activists allege, was used routinely by the FIA to silence dissent. Of course, conversely, bad actors use social media to spread disinformation and misinformation, necessitating oversight.

But at a time when digital rights and privacy remain key issues for the state to address, the authorities have opted to forgo any meaningful dialogue with digital rights groups, the IT sector, or even the public. Such an opaque approach fosters distrust and scepticism towards the government's intentions. It has neither presented a clear rationale nor demonstrated the deficiencies within the existing framework that necessitated this move.

The reuse of the FIA's resources — personnel, assets, and existing cases — under a new banner raises a fundamental question: what exactly is the objective of the NCCIA that the FIA could not achieve? If the goal was to enhance capabilities or streamline operations, would it not have been more prudent to bolster the existing framework rather than dismantle it? The abruptness of the move suggests the new rulers are not behind it.

The move will likely create redundancies and confusion, diluting the focus from actual cybercrime threats to the procedural chaos of transitioning to a new agency. Also, such disruptions could hinder ongoing operations and complicate international cooperation under links nurtured by the FIA.

Furthermore, the NCCIA, with its broad and unclear mandate, could potentially lead to increased surveillance and data collection practices, encroaching upon the personal liberties of citizens under the guise of security.

It appears the PML-N government is working in the same manner as when Peca was being promulgated, when no input was taken. The situation has called into question the regulatory environment for the internet in the coming years. Ostensibly, the aim is to exert greater control over social media and to gain more power to crack down on activists, dissidents and journalists critical of state policies.

The government owes the public an explanation of the necessity and aims of the NCCIA. It must articulate how this new set-up will better serve the cybersecurity needs of the nation without compromising democratic freedoms.

It is also crucial that further developments in this area involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Engaging with experts in digital rights, cybersecurity, the legal domain, and the public is essential to ensure that the agency's operations are balanced, effective, and respectful of the rights it is purportedly designed to protect. The urge to police social media must be resisted.

**Inconsistent ties**

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

After withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, the US appears to have downsized its relations with Pakistan. President Joe Biden did not make any contact with Pakistan's leadership for the first three years of his presidency. It is only in March this year that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif received an unsigned letter from him underscoring the "enduring partnership" between the two nations and identifying areas where they could work together. Biden's letter was generally welcomed in Pakistan because of the country's policy to maintain mutually beneficial ties with all major powers, including the US with which it has had sustained periods of close cooperation.

However, the letter has not fundamentally altered the tenor of the bilateral relationship, though some official contacts have started. The acting undersecretary for political affairs visited Islamabad recently for talks on bilateral ties, including regional security issues. Our prime minister sent a short reply to Biden's letter, and the current US ambassador to Pakistan seems inclined to enhance bilateral ties. There could be five plausible reasons for America's current disenchantment with Pakistan. First, political instability, the continuing economic crisis, and the worsening law and order situation have lowered Pakistan's relevance for the outside world, including the US. Second, after withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, the US lost interest in that country and Pakistan, though the resurgence of terrorist entities in Afghanistan, is becoming a growing inter-

national concern. Third, the US is now focused on its rivalry with China, for which it has chosen India as its strategic partner. Fourth, the US seems to have concluded that Pakistan is in the Chinese camp even though Pakistan has consistently signalled its desire for strategic autonomy. Fifth, the allegation that the US had played a role in the April 2022 regime change persists, even though Donald Lu in his recent testimony before the Congressional subcommittee has denied it.

This is not the first time that Pakistan and the US have been estranged. In fact, during the past seven decades, their relationship has oscillated between warm engagement and cold estrangement. When Pakistan started its life as an independent state in 1947, it had to build its statecraft from scratch, with the then Indian leaders determined to undo Pakistan. The US at that time appeared as the preferred source for much-needed economic and military assistance. Experts from the US facilitated the green revolution and rapid industrial development. Pakistan soon became a role model for other developing countries. Pakistanis thought that they had found in the US an enduring partner.

But this assessment turned out to be incorrect. The bonhomie ended with the 1965 India-Pakistan war, when the US imposed sanctions on Pakistan. Later in 1971, the expectation that America's seventh fleet would help Pakistan was dashed. The two countries moved away from each other only to come closer a decade later when Soviet forces entered Afghanistan. Pakistan teamed up with the US and helped create nurseries for the Afghan jihad. However, as

soon as the Soviets left Afghanistan, America imposed sanctions on Pakistan under the Pressler Amendment.

The events of 9/11 once again brought the two closer, this time to fight a global war on terror. However, as the war in Afghanistan lingered on, a frustrated US decided to pull out its troops, partly holding Pakistan responsible because of its support for the Afghan Taliban. Ever since, the two countries have been drifting away from each other. A debate is on-going in Pakistan as to why US-Pakistan ties resemble a roller-coaster ride and whether America is a reliable friend. The answer lies in a mismatch of expectations. For Pakistanis, a friend in need is a friend indeed. However, for the US, as indeed for most powers, inter-state relationship is a function of the convergence of mutual interests.

An important question weighing on the minds of Pakistan's leadership concerns how to find the right balance in our ties with the US and China, which are locked in an intensifying strategic competition. China is a great friend which has made significant investments in Pakistan, including CPEC. It has never embarrassed us or intervened in our internal affairs, and always supported us at international forums. The US is our largest trading partner, a long-standing source of investments, a favourite destination of Pakistani students and physicians, important to our IT community, and a military partner in the fight against terrorism.

That the government of Pakistan has decided to maintain relations with both the US and China predicated on our own national interests seems to be the right course of action. -- Courtesy Dawn

**An opportunity being lost**

Ghazi Salahuddin

Being a man of action in the lazy setting of Pakistan's politics, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would know that every challenge is an opportunity. The bigger the challenge, the bigger the opportunity. And the task he has at hand now is truly monumental. So, what does his response look like?

Before I come to that, let me dwell a bit on this theory of challenge and response that was defined by English historian Arnold Toynbee. This hypothesis by a philosopher of history explains why and how civilizations throughout history have grown and vanished.

Toynbee concluded that, in the words of a text I have, civilizations "prosper by meeting challenges head-on with the help of innovative minorities led by exceptional leaders". We are told that "civilizations began to fail when their leaders ceased to respond creatively to challenges".

There is little doubt that Pakistan is presently in bad shape. There seems no way out of our present difficulties. I am tempted to quote Thomas Paine: "These are times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman".

If these are sublime thoughts, let me climb down to the level of the ridiculous. On Sunday last, on a holiday when all government offices are closed, the Cabinet Division issued a notification to announce the appointment of Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar as the deputy prime minister "with immediate effect and until further orders". The appointment, of course, was made by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who has to deal with many great challenges.

During this week, Ishaq Dar's elevation has been widely discussed in

the media. In countless conversations across the country, in drawing rooms and on coffee tables and street corners, people may have wondered about this move. It seemed something not so much for the serious political commentators as for the comedy shows and the cartoons.

Since this subject is already dated for this column, I'll let it go. But that initial thought about the grim challenge that the prime minister has to respond to is important for the nation. Is it at all doable? Is the job within the reach of Shehbaz Sharif or any other leader in this country? Is there a prescription somewhere to guide the leader of a country like Pakistan?

Moving ahead is something. Our story is that of lagging behind. In recent decades, our ranking in South Asia, across almost all social indicators, has gone down. These are societies very much like ours. This means that we have lessons to learn. On the face of it, it should be easy for us to follow in the footsteps of some specific countries.

Ah, but every unhappy country is unhappy in its own ways. Pakistan has its unique problems. What is not unique is the leadership it has — and I am not alluding here to the man who is in office at present. Those who pretend to know the solutions have never been in short supply. Yet, the country appears to be wandering in the wilderness.

When I suggest that the present arrangement is not delivering, the point is that no radical moves have been made to create momentum for change. No revolutionary steps are in evidence to turn the tide of events. By and large, the impression is that this is business as usual. Sadly, this will not work. It does not work in revolutionary times.

Are these revolutionary times? An answer to this question would require a solemn

investigation by social scientists and thinkers. We are aware of the attention that the present rulers are devoting to economic revival. This is necessary but economists and financial experts cannot set a country's ideological, intellectual and moral sense of direction.

Incidentally, I was in Lahore to participate in the 5th Asma Jahangir Conference when the news of Ishaq Dar's additional appointment was made public, allowing us a little diversion in the midst of some very thoughtful and engaging discussions. The entire weekend pulsated with excitement with the presence of so many renowned national and international observers of current affairs and defenders of human rights.

Ever since her untimely death in February 2018, this country has desperately been in need of the wisdom and courage that Asma Jahangir possessed. She was an exceptional human being and her struggle for human rights is an inspiring chapter in our history.

One measure of Asma Jahangir's stature in the global narrative of democracy and human rights was the quality of participation and discourse in this conference on the theme: "People's Mandate: Safeguarding Civil Rights in South Asia". In terms of how it was conceived and designed, the conference was a very insightful compendium of analyses and elucidations of an entire range of national issues. It is not possible for me to sum up the proceedings of the conference. The idea is to see it against the backdrop of what is happening in Pakistan and what options do our policymakers and rulers have to set things right. In other words, here was something for those in power to seriously look into and interact with in an intellectual context.

**Commerce News**

**Escalating Tobacco Tax by 37% proposed by SPDC & WHO to save lives, boost revenue**

ISLAMABAD (INP): An increase of 37% in Federal Excise Duty (FED) on tobacco products has been proposed by the Social Policy Development Centre (SPDC) to reinforce the gains already achieved and to advance further in enhancing public health outcomes and revenue collection.

"Pakistan can save as many as 265,000 lives, generate an additional revenue of Rs 37.7 billion and push 757,000 people

to quit smoking through increasing the FED by 37 percent," said the SPDC policy paper name "Recovering Healthcare Costs and Saving Lives" that aligns recommendation of World Health Organization (WHO) and Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK).

The SPDC proposal comes when the government prepares to outline its budgetary agenda, in a bid to prioritize public health and economic

prosperity through targeted tobacco tax reforms. Pakistan has a two-tiered system of FED on cigarettes. The country made significant strides and increased the FED on cigarettes in 2022-23 with a substantial increase in FED. The current FED share in retail prices is 48 percent and 68 percent respectively for low and high tiers. The SPDC has warned of negative effect on both the revenue and public health efforts if the

rates (FED) were not increased and trend was not maintained. Therefore, it advocated to further adjust the FED in line with international standards, to take the tax share of retail prices towards 70 percent.

The proposal seeks to take the FED share to 54 percent or Rs 154 and 72.1 percent or Rs 452 for economy and premium brands, respectively.

The proposal was backed by the gains of previous tax adjustments.



DUBAI: A team of Pakistan's Consulate in Dubai headed by Ali Zeb Khan, Trade & Investment Counsellor received by H.E. Mohammed Khalifa Bin Dhaen Al Mheiri, Group Chairman Bin Dhaen Holding & Chairman of Jumeira University at Khalifa Bin Dhaen Majlis, Zabeel Dubai.

**Rotary International district 3271 recognizes outstanding social services at HOPECON conference 2024**

**Independent Report**  
KARACHI: The Rotary International District 3271 recently held a successful 3-day HOPECON Conference 2024 at a private hotel. Deputy Governor Shaikh Intiaz Hussain was honored with the Award for Continuous Best Social Ser-

vice Trustee The Rotary Foundation Aziz Memon, former Finance Minister Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, former Federal Minister Dr. Ishrat Hussain, Muhammad Ali Tabba, Deputy Governor State Bank Dr. Inayat Hussain, Majid Aziz, CEO

of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has announced plan to automatically register shopkeepers through its own staff who remained evaded to participate in the Trader-Friendly Scheme. Media reports indicate that millions of traders across the country evade direct tax payments, prompting the FBR to initiate measures to address registration discrepancies.



vice for three consecutive years. Shaikh Intiaz Hussain has been awarded the Best President in the first year, Best Assistant Governor in the second year, and Best Deputy Governor this year.

The conference was attended by more than 700 Rotarians from all over the world. It featured distinguished personalities such

as Unilever Pakistan Amir Paracha, CEO AKUH Dr. Farhat Abbas, Director Premier Cables Shahid Ismail, and Chairperson Hissar Foundation Simi Kamal, among others. Renowned artists Abrar ul Haq, Uzmi and Barkat Ali, Mayer Hasan, Sahar Gul Khan, and others also showcased their talents during the 3-day HOPECON Confer-

ence 2024. Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori also participated in the event and presented Deputy Governor Shaikh Intiaz Hussain with the Best Deputy Governor Award. Prior to this, Shaikh Intiaz Hussain had already received awards for Best

**FBR set plan to register shopkeepers through its own staff**

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has announced plan to automatically register shopkeepers through its own staff who remained evaded to participate in the Trader-Friendly Scheme. Media reports indicate that millions of traders across the country evade direct tax payments, prompting the FBR to initiate measures to address registration discrepancies.

**Govt needs to minimize production cost, exports: Anjum Nisar**

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel and former President FPCCI, Mian Anjum Nisar has said that the government should promote industrialization and enhance exports through lowering cost of production, paying early refunds to solve liquidity crunch and relaxing import policy for industrial raw material. In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that business community was facing tough challenges because of limited

business; therefore, the government should formulate regional, provincial and central level task force besides chalking out sector wise regional policies which would help it to address the problems confronted by exporters. Mian Anjum Nisar suggested that One Window Operation should be introduced for the replacing the lengthy procedures that involve interaction of manufacturers with various agencies.

**NPO launches program for development of gemstone sector**

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Productivity Organization (NPO) initiated a technical assistance program for the gemstone sector in collaboration with the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) Tokyo, Japan for the development of sector. Consultancy and workshops focused on gemstone identification, certification, cutting and

polishing techniques with experts from the Gems and Jewelry Institute, Thailand, said a press release issued here Sunday. Sessions held in Peshawar, Gilgit, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore aimed to enhance stakeholder capacity and foster economic growth through knowledge sharing and skill development. The program involved

professionals, associations and international experts, promoting collaboration and economic prosperity in the gems and jewelry sector. The experts shared knowledge and hands-on skills and practices for enhancing the capacity of the stakeholders, paving way for broader collaboration and propelling towards sustained economic prosperity.

**SNGPL disconnects 12 connections of gas pilferers**

MULTAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) teams took action against twelve more gas pilferers and disconnected their connections. According to the details, a customer was found using a household meter for a generator and hospital machinery at Amin Hospital Burewala, on which the task force team disconnected his meter. Likewise, five connections of consumers were removed in Burewala for being illegally installed far away from the required distance.

**SNGPL executives and engineers demand removal of disparities in salaries**

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: The junior and middle executives and engineers of the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited have demanded removal of certain disparities in salaries and implementation of the policies approved in the HR Manual. In a representation addressed to the SNGPL Managing Director dated April 20, 2024, the SNGPL junior and middle executives and engineers said that they had been the most deprived segments of the organization as they

had been struggling hard to meet their daily needs owing to the company's ironic compensation packages. These executives and engineers have to work in hostile and challenging environments with limited resources sometimes in hazardous conditions like as frequent incidents of shootings, beatings, threats, harassment and legal court cases registered against them by high profile individuals or general public inside or outside the SNGPL premises on a repeated basis.



## KP law minister announces Rs 2m for Aghosh to help orphans

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate on Sunday said that helping welfare organizations, especially those patronizing and helping the orphans and poorest of the society were able for international award.

This he said while addressing the ceremony held at Aghosh Al-Khidmat Kohat Campus as chief guest. Central PTI Leader Shehryar Khan Afridi MNA, Members Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Shafi Jan and Shah Turab Khan, Aghosh Al-Khidmat

Kohat chief Hafiz Abid Hamad and other notables also addressed the event. The ceremony beside others was also attended by the former MPA Muhammad Ali, important religious, political and social figures of Kohat, elders of the area, staff and students of the institution in large numbers.

The law minister maintained that participating in a ceremony of this important welfare institution of his native district as chief guest was a matter of great honor and pride for him, for which he was personally grateful to its organizers.



PESHAWAR: Delegation from different walks of life meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.

## GB CM urges PM to deploy motorway police on KKH

GILGIT (INP): Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Chief Minister (CM), Gulbar Khan, has written a letter to Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif, urging the deployment of motorway police on the Karakoram Highway (KKH).

CM Gulbar Khan stressed that the deployment of motorway police is essential for safe travel on the Karakoram

Highway, which has witnessed several fatal accidents in recent times. Gulbar said that he has ordered an investigation into the recent accident near Chilas and directed that measures be taken to prevent such incidents in the future.

The Karakoram Highway has seen a surge in traffic accidents, resulting in the loss of

precious lives. The Chief Minister noted that these accidents are not only causing human loss but also having a negative impact on tourism in Gilgit Baltistan.

It is pertinent to mention here that last year in December, at least 10 people, including two soldiers, lost their lives, and 21 passengers received injuries when unknown attackers opened fire at

the Rawalpindi-bound bus from nearby hills in Chilas, causing the vehicle to collide with a goods truck. As per details, Deputy Commissioner Diarmer Captain (Rtd) Arif Ahmad stated that the incident occurred in Chilas district where unknown assailants opened fire on a passenger and the uncontrolled bus collided with a truck.



TARBELA: Chief Guest, Chief Engineer (TDP) Turesh Kumar viewing handmade stuff prepared by special children during ceremony on the occasion of Annual Day Function-2024 of Mashaal Initiative Institute of Special Education at Sobra City Colony.

## ASP takes strict notice of fighting between two groups

**Independent Report**  
MIRPUR MATHHELO: ASP Hamid Intiaz SDPO Mirpur Mathelo takes strict notice of fighting between two groups of Gurgage tribe in the limits of Ubauro, a pregnant woman Masmat Rukhsana Gurgage lost her 5-month-old child and several people were injured in accordance

which he took strict notice and immediately rushed to Civil Hospital Ubauro. On arrival, the pregnant woman met Masmat Rukhsana Gurgage and SHO Ubauro ordered that an immediate case be filed against the accused involved in Musmat Rukhsana Gurgage and arrest the accused as soon as possible.

ASP Hamid Intiaz received news on WhatsApp that a woman had lost her pregnancy as a result of a fight between two groups of Gurgaj tribe in Ubauro,

On the order of ASP Hamid Intiaz, the SHO of Ubauro police station has registered a case crime number 109.2024 at Abaro police station.

## One more polio team incharge kidnapped

**Independent Report**  
SHIKARPUR: Two more including a Polio Team Incharge of UC Sehwni were kidnapped in two separate incidents from Shikarpur on Saturday night. According to initial reports reached here that one Polio Team Incharge named Khalid Ahmed son of Sibghatullah Bhayo was kidnapped by some group of armed men from the jurisdiction of Naparkot police station and took them away forcibly on gun point towards katcha area of Rustam. Today on Sunday, the kidnappers had called the parents of kidnapped Polio Team Incharge Khalid Bhayo from his mobile phone and demanded for release of their accomplices (dacoits) who were arrested by Shikarpur Police with the threat if they want to see alive their beloved.

## Second, third phases of "Suthra Punjab Program" being launched simultaneously: Minister

SIALKOT (APP): Provincial Minister for Local Government Punjab Zeeshan Rafique has said that after the success of the first phase of the "Suthra Punjab Program", the second and third phases are being started simultaneously.

He expressed these views at a press conference in Daska. He said in the second phase, the provision of equal facilities of municipal services in rural and urban areas is being ensured. At the tehsil level, there will be a sentry worker for 250 houses in the rural and rural areas who would be responsible for cleaning the streets, removing garbage from houses, cleaning the drains and sewerage etc.

To ensure this, the cleaning and sanitation system will be outsourced at the tehsil level. Garbage collected from houses, neighborhoods and markets will first be shifted to the temporary collection points, he added. Zeeshan Rafique said that digital monitoring of the new sanitation system will be done in rural and urban areas.

To recycle the garbage collected at the village and ward level, the waste will be processed into energy and fertilizer at 10 recycling plants at the divisional level, while the remaining garbage will be made safe from every aspect by following modern requirements in the landfill sites, so that the

environment can be made human friendly, he maintained. He said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government has started a revolutionary program like "Suthra Punjab Program" for the first time in 76 years and a new industry would be created by recycling garbage.

He said that 57,500 tons of solid waste is generated daily across Punjab.

Municipal departments have the capacity to handle only 18,000 tons of waste, and about 39,000 tons of waste is polluting the environment every day. Picking up and disposing of the remaining waste is no less than a challenge.

## Minister for quality edu. in educational institutions run by Labour Dept

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister of Labour Department Fazal Shakoor Khan Sunday said that provision of quality education in educational institutions run by the labour department is the topmost priority of our government.

He urged the teachers to work hard and focus on provision of quality education to laborer children studying in different schools of the labour department.

He was addressing as a chief guest in a prize distribution ceremony organized by Rahamkar Welfare Social Foundation at Working Folks Grammar School Kaka Sahib district Nowshera. Earlier, the provincial minister visited different sections of the school while the school principal briefed the minister regarding school administration. The minister was also informed about various challenges and shortcomings faced by the school.



MULTAN: Former PMLN MP Shahzad Maqbool Bhutta announcing party decision to support PPP candidate in NA 148 by election.

## Qamber Excise Police action against drug dealers, drug dealer arrested with 480 grams of hashish

**Independent Report**  
LARKANA: Last day Qamber Excise Police acted on a tip-off at Wagan-Naseerabad Check Post and seized 480 grams of hashish from Abdullah son of Mohammad Jan Pathan, a boot polisher in Lala Rainik city, who is to be a resident of Khayber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province raid with staff under supervision of Excise Inspector Ali Ahmad Abbasi and filed a case under the Narcotics Act, for further investigation is being conducted against the accused.

On this occasion, Excise Inspector Ali Ahmad Abbasi told the media that Excise Min-

ister Sharjeel Inam Memon Abdul Rahman Raj Director Excise Larkana ETO Qamber Aziz-ur-Rehman actions against drug dealers have been intensified by following the instructions of Aziz-ur-Rahman Unnar.

On the other hand, Excise Inspector Ali Ahmad Abbasi, who successfully conducted the operation, he said that the drug dealers will not be spared under any circumstances.

It will be delivered while at all times there are youth checkpoints against drug dealers and smugglers at all the borders of District Qamber Shahdadkot.

## International News

### Russia accuses Nato of preparing for conflict

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Nato's four-month-long military exercises near Russia's borders, known as Steadfast Defender, are proof the alliance is preparing for a potential conflict with Russia, a spokeswoman for Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

The spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, dismissed accusations by Nato this week that Russia is engaged in hybrid attacks on its member states, saying this was misleading "misinformation" aimed at distracting people from the alliance's activities. It was Nato that had waged a hybrid war with Russia by supporting Ukraine with arms, intelligence and finances, she said in a statement.

"Right now, Nato's largest exercise since the Cold War, Steadfast De-

fender, is taking place near Russia's borders. According to their scenario, coalition's actions against Russia are being practiced using all the instruments, including hybrid and conventional weapons," she said in a statement. "We have to admit that Nato is seriously preparing for a 'potential conflict' with us." Relations between Russia and the West have been at their most hostile in decades following the start of Russia's military conflict in Ukraine in 2022.

Announcing the start of the drills in January, Nato said 90,000 troops would take part, rehearsing how US troops could reinforce European allies in countries bordering Russia and on the alliance's eastern flank if a conflict were to flare up. The drills, Nato's largest exercise since the Cold War, are set to run

through May.

Russia said at the time the drills marked an "irrevocable return" of the alliance to Cold War schemes.

The Russian defence ministry said on Saturday its air defence forces shot down four US-produced long-range missiles over the Crimea peninsula, weapons known as Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) that Washington has shipped to Ukraine in recent weeks. The ministry said later that Russian aircraft and air defence systems had downed a total of 15 ATACMS in the past week.

On Tuesday, Russian officials said Ukraine had attacked Crimea with ATACMS in an attempt to pierce Russian air defences of the annexed peninsula but that six had been shot down.



France's Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, China's President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan walk under umbrellas upon their arrival for an official two-day state visit, at Orly airport, south of Paris.

### China's Xi praises French ties as Macron prepares to talk trade

**Monitoring Desk**  
PARIS: President Xi Jinping lauded China's ties with France as an international model on Sunday as he arrived in Paris for a rare visit against a backdrop of mounting trade disputes with the EU.

French President Emmanuel Macron is set to urge Xi to reduce trade imbalances and to use his influence with Russia over the war in Ukraine. China's President is due to meet Macron and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen on Monday.

### North Korea's UN ambassador says new sanctions monitoring groups will fail

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: Efforts led by the US and other Western countries to form new groups to monitor sanctions on North Korea will fail, the country's UN envoy said on Sunday, according to state media KCNA.

Ambassador Kim Song made the comment in response to a joint statement the US and its allies issued this week calling to continue the work of a UN panel of experts monitoring longstanding sanctions against Pyongyang for its nuclear weapons and missile programs.

### Russia hits Ukraine regions, Zelenskiy says Su-25 bomber downed

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Russian attacks on Ukraine's Kharkiv and Dnipro regions and the Black Sea port city of Odesa killed at least two civilians, set a food factory ablaze and damaged other infrastructure, homes and commercial buildings on Saturday, regional officials said. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia had used eight missiles of various kinds and nearly 70 guided aerial bombs against communities and frontline positions during the day, after Ukraine's air force

### Gaza needs biggest post-war reconstruction effort since WWII: UN

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA STRIP: The United Nations said that the post-war reconstruction of Gaza would require an international effort unseen since the aftermath of World War II, estimating it could cost up to US\$40 billion.

It came as Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh struck an optimistic tone over a possible truce and hostage release deal for Gaza, after weeks of largely stalled negotiations. There have been reports of sticking points between the militant group and Israel nearly seven months into the war that has devastated the Palestinian territory. But Haniyeh, head of the militant group's Qatar-based political bureau, said in calls to Egyptian and Qatari mediators that Hamas was studying the latest proposal with a "positive spirit".

Much of Gaza has been reduced to a grey landscape of rubble and the United Nations estimated the cost of reconstruction at between US\$30 billion and US\$40 billion.

"The scale of the destruction is huge and unprecedented... this is a mission that the global community has not dealt with since World War II," UN assistant secretary-general Abdallah al-Dardani told a briefing in the Jordanian capital Amman. The UN official said "72 per cent of all residential buildings have been completely or partially destroyed". Reconstruction is made more difficult by the presence of large quantities of unexploded ordnance in the debris that Gaza's Civil Defence agency says triggers "more than 10 explosions every week".



Palestinian children look up as they walk at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.

### Gaza truce talks resume in Cairo without Israel

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA STRIP: Talks resumed in Egypt on Saturday aimed at halting months of war in Gaza between Hamas and Israel that have triggered protests around the world.

Mediators from Qatar, Egypt and the United States sat down with a Hamas delegation to hear the group's response to a proposal that would halt fighting for 40 days and exchange hostages for Palestinian prisoners, according to details released by

Britain. Israel has yet to send a delegation to Cairo, with a top official telling AFP that it would do so only if there was "positive movement" on the proposed framework. "Tough and long negotiations are expected for an actual deal," the Israeli official cautioned. Previous negotiations stalled in part on Hamas's demand for a lasting ceasefire and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's repeated vows to crush the group's remaining fighters in the southern city of Rafah.

### Colombia breaks diplomatic ties with Israel

**Monitoring Desk**  
BOGOTA: Colombia has become the latest Latin American country to announce it will break diplomatic relations with Israel over its military campaign in Gaza.

But the repercussions for the South American nation could be broader than for other countries due to longstanding bilateral agreements over security matters.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Wednesday described Israel's actions in Gaza as "genocide" and announced his government would end diplomatic relations with Israel effective Thursday.

But he did not address how his decision could affect Colombia's military, which uses Israeli-built warplanes and machine guns to fight drug cartels and rebel groups, and a free trade agreement between both countries that went into effect in 2020.

### Russia hits Ukraine regions, Zelenskiy says Su-25 bomber downed

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Russian attacks on Ukraine's Kharkiv and Dnipro regions and the Black Sea port city of Odesa killed at least two civilians, set a food factory ablaze and damaged other infrastructure, homes and commercial buildings on Saturday, regional officials said. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia had used eight missiles of various kinds and nearly 70 guided aerial bombs against communities and frontline positions during the day, after Ukraine's air force

downed 13 Shahed drones that targeted the Kharkiv and Dnipro regions overnight. Zelenskiy said Moscow had no desire for peace. "Russia can only be forced to leave Ukraine alone," he said in his nightly video address. A world peace summit taking place in Switzerland in June without Russia - "must succeed", he said. He said Ukraine's 110th mechanised brigade brought down a Russian Su-25 fighter-bomber over the eastern Donetsk region, one of four areas of Ukraine Moscow says it has annexed.

### Israeli police raid Al Jazeera after shutdown order

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: Israeli police raided a Jerusalem hotel room used by Al Jazeera as its de facto office on Sunday following a government decision to shut down the Qatari-owned TV station's local operations, an Israeli official and an Al Jazeera source told Reuters. Video circulated online showed plainclothes officers dismantling camera equipment in a hotel room.

### Brazil mounts frantic rescue effort as flooding kills 66

**Monitoring Desk**  
RIO GRANDE DO SUL: Authorities in southern Brazil raced against the clock on Sunday to rescue people from raging floods and mudslides that have killed at least 66 and forced more than 80,000 to flee their homes.

Across Porto Alegre, the capital city of Rio Grande do Sul state, people stood on rooftops hoping to be rescued, while others in canoes or small boats navigated streets that had turned into rivers.

Civil defence officials said at least 101 people were missing in the latest in a string of catastrophic weather events in the South American giant.

Viewed from the air, Porto Alegre was completely flooded, with streets under water and the roofs of some houses barely visible. According to the lo-

cal municipality, the Guaiba River, which flows through the city of 1.4 million people, reached a record high level of 5.3 metres, well above the historic peak of 4.76 metres that had stood as a record since the devastating 1941 floods. Water was still advancing into economically important Porto Alegre and hundreds of other localities, with increasingly dramatic consequences. Rain was intermittent on Sunday morning, but was expected to continue for another day at least as floodwaters kept rising.

In addition to the tens of thousands forced from their homes, Brazil's civil defence agency said more than a million people lacked access to drinking water and it described the damage as incalculable. Some 15,000 people are now living in shelters.



## Religious scholars, leaders unify behind 'Code of Conduct for Pilgrims'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Religious scholars and leaders from diverse schools of thought across the nation on Sunday endorsed the 'Code of Conduct for Pilgrims', issued jointly by the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and the Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP).

According to a statement, this unified stance reflects a significant step towards ensuring a safe and spiritually enriching pilgrimage experience for Pakistani Muslims.

The Code of Conduct, meticulously crafted by the PUC and HOAP, encompasses various aspects of conduct, etiquette, and safety measures to be observed by pilgrims embarking on the sacred journey of Hajj. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to Islamic principles, maintaining discipline, and fostering a spirit of unity and brotherhood among pilgrims.

Key provisions of the

Code of Conduct include guidance on personal hygiene, respect for fellow pilgrims, adherence to designated routes and timings, and compliance with the instructions of authorities and organizers.

Moreover, it underscores the significance of upholding ethical standards, displaying patience and tolerance, and refraining from any behavior that may tarnish the sanctity of the pilgrimage.

The endorsement of this Code of Conduct by religious scholars and leaders underscores the collective commitment of Pakistan's religious community to promote harmony, respect, and reverence during the sacred pilgrimage. It reflects a shared understanding of the importance of ensuring a safe and spiritually fulfilling experience for all pilgrims, regardless of their sect or school of thought.

In a joint statement, PUC Chairman Hafiz

Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi and HOAP President Jamal Khan Tarakai, expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support and endorsement from religious scholars and leaders. They emphasized the significance of collaboration and unity among different religious groups in upholding the values of Islam and facilitating the performance of religious obligations.

They said the endorsement of the Code of Conduct by religious scholars and leaders is expected to have a profound impact on the behavior and mindset of Pakistani pilgrims, guiding them towards a Hajj experience characterized by piety, humility, and devotion.

They said it also serves as a testament to the collective wisdom and leadership of Pakistan's religious community in fostering a culture of responsibility and reverence in religious practices.



ISLAMABAD: Civil Society hold a Sit-in protest at D-Chowk in the Federal Capital during Save Gaza Campaign.

## Mushaal lauds COAS for unwavering support for Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD (INP): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, the Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organisation and wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat leader, Muhammad Yasin Malik, has hailed the Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir's unwavering support to the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in their struggle for right to self-determination.

Mushaal Hussein Mullick in a statement in Islamabad said that the army chief's remarks on Kashmir that Pakistan would continue to provide "moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmir brothers was a source of inspiration, as it would give

a new impetus to the ongoing Kashmiri freedom struggle.

The Hurriyat leader went on to say that the Pakistan army chief's assertion was a reminder to the brave Kashmiri freedom fighters that they were not alone in their just fight, as entire Pakistan was firmly standing by their Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their pursuit for freedom to break the shackles of Indian slavery.

Mushaal stated that General Munir rightly highlighted that the international community's silence about the reign of terror unleashed by Indian forces in IIOJK could not suppress the voice of freedom.

She continued that the Pakistan army chief's remarks was a clear-cut and unequivocal message to India that Kashmir was an internationally recognized disputed territory whose final status was to be decided as per the UN agreed formula and aspirations of the people of the scenic valley.

Meanwhile Mushaal paid rich tributes to veteran Kashmiri pro-freedom political leader Shaheed Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai on his 3rd martyrdom anniversary.

Shaheed Sehrai was the chairman of Tehreek-e-Hurriyat Jammu Kashmir who achieved martyrdom on 5th May, 2021 while he was in custody in Jammu jail.

## 20 buses to be started for female students, teachers of ICT Schools

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to solve the problem of transportation for female students and women teachers of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Schools, has taken an important decision of launching new buses.

As per initiative, as many as 20 buses of federal educational institutions will be prepared and put on the roads with the support of the district administration.

The female students and teachers of public and private educational institutions will be able to travel for free in these buses operated in the urban and rural

areas of the federal capital with the support of the district administration.

These new buses will be painted pink and will be reserved for women and girls.

The Ministry of Federal Education has taken this step in view of the increasing dropout rate of girls from schools due to inadequate transport facilities, said the Secretary of Education while talking to Media persons.

He went on to say that in the internal audit, it was found that thirty per cent of the total 385 buses of federal educational institutions have been parked due to unusability.

## Jacobabad remains hottest district with mercury at 42° Celsius

ISLAMABAD (INP): Temperatures have soared in various parts of Sindh and Punjab provinces as 42° Celsius temperature recorded in Jacobabad district. Maximum temperature recorded 41° Celsius in Larkana and Nawabshah districts and 40° Celsius in Sukkur in Sindh today, according to the Met Office.

The mercury increased to 39° Celsius in Rahim Yar Khan and 38° Celsius in Lahore, Faisalabad, Kasur and Multan in Punjab. Global temperatures hit record highs last year and the UN's World Meteorological Organization said.

## Muqam urges opposition to be constructive, not confrontational

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for SAFRON and Kashmir Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Engr Amir Muqam on Sunday urged the opposition parties to adopt a constructive approach rather than wasting time on useless protests with confrontational tactics.

He stated this during oath taking ceremony of newly elected body of Buner District Bar Council Association.

The federal minister stated that these people got nothing from protests in the past and will never gain anything in the future, but only cause losses to the country. He said that what happened on May 9 was highly regrettable.

Engr Amir Muqam urged the lawyers to be vigilant and to reject those who

seek to exploit them for political interests. However, he emphasized that they should play a constructive role in the interests of the country.

He emphasized that public service entails more than protesting; it involves addressing public issues, which is the true responsibility of elected representatives.

The federal minister stressed the need to abandon the blame game and instead, actively contribute to the country's best interests.

He said that there was a clear indication of improvement in the economic situation, with all institutions and the government on the same page. He also noted that inflation was an issue being faced by everybody.

## Security officials briefed for effective duty

ISLAMABAD: According to the special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali

the SSP Security Division directed the officers on patrolling duty about being alert during patrolling and keeping a watchful eye on suspicious persons,



Nasir Rizvi, a special briefing was held for the officers deployed on night duty at High Security Zone regarding the better performance of their duties, a public relations officer said.

He said that, senior officers briefed the security officials to maintain the law and order and prevent any untoward incident. Moreover, officers were briefed regarding duty in view of the current situation.

strict orders were issued regarding proper uniforms and discipline.

He further directed the officers to be ready all the time and perform their duties in an effective manner.

Islamabad Police is utilizing all available resources in order to maintain the law and order situation in the federal capital and the protection of life and property of citizens is among the top priorities.

## Education ministry to establish 16 latest IT labs in federal capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has decided to establish 16 state-of-the-art IT labs in the federal capital to provide the youth with the latest skills and increase employment opportunities for them. According to an announcement by the Education Ministry, these IT labs will be built in 16 federal government degree colleges located in different areas of Islamabad.

As per details, in these IT laboratories, students will be offered six-month courses in blockchain, data science, AI and game development.

In the first phase, about 1000 students will be offered courses, which are being introduced keeping in view the market demand.

"These courses are designed by NAVITC in collaboration with renowned universities like NUST, National Skills University, COMSATS and NUML. These courses will start in the second week of May 2024" the Ministry said. The ministry further informed that as many as 3600 students have registered for these courses so far.

It has been decided by the Ministry of Federal Education to prepare these labs under the direction of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

It is worth mentioning here that Providing employment opportunities to the youth is included in the agenda of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

## PRs directs all DSs for accelerating efforts to retrieve occupied land

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Railways has issued directives to all Divisional Superintendents (DS) for accelerating efforts to retrieve around 13,972 acres of land illegally occupied by private individuals and different government departments across the country.

According to an official of the ministry, about 5,809 acres land of Railways was occupied in Punjab, 1,181 acres are under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,948 acres in Sindh and 1,034 acres land occupied in Balochistan.

The category of land under illegal occupations included commercial, residential, agricultural, and various persons or departments, he added.

As per details provided by the official, around 769 acres were commercial in all the provinces, 3,309 residential, 5,512 acres agricultural and 4,382 were under encroachment of various persons or departments.

He said that the department had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations that were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades.

The category of land under illegal occupations included commercial, residential, agricultural, and various persons or departments, he added.

ISLAMABAD: The house wives on their way to home carrying dry wood on their heads to light the stove in the Golra area of Federal Capital.



Federal Minister for Kashmir affairs and Gilgit Baltistan along with States and Frontier regions Engineer Amir Muqam taking oath from newly elected cabinet of the District Bar Association, Buner.

## IFA carries out 1158 inspections; imposes fines over Rs 3.5 mln in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Irfan Nawaz Memon has chaired a monthly performance review meeting in a bid to ensure food safety to citizen of the Federal Capital.

During the meeting, Deputy Director Operation of IFA, Dr. Tahira Saddique briefed the attendees on the authority's activities over the past month, revealing significant strides in the fight against unsafe food.

The IFA carried out 1,158 inspections over the last 30 days, resulting in fines totaling Rs 3,546,000. These fines were imposed on businesses found selling harmful food products or low-quality items. Additionally, more than 4,944 liters of hazardous health oils and other unsafe items were destroyed during various raids.

Director Memon stressed the importance of ensuring food safety and

directed the team to intensify their efforts to license food-related businesses.

The initiative will be carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the focus will be on raising awareness about the necessity and benefits of obtaining a food license. The second phase will involve taking action against businesses that fail to comply with licensing regulations.

Dr Tahira said the IFA's ongoing efforts reflected a broader commitment to public health and consumer safety. Through increased inspections, hefty fines, and proactive awareness campaigns, the authority aimed to create a safer environment for consumers and hold businesses accountable for their products. The authority's measures were part of a larger strategy to clamp down on unsafe food practices and promote higher food quality standards in the region, she added.

## Deputy PM, Turkish FM discuss bilateral ties between two countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan reviewed the state of bilateral relations on Sunday and emphasized the exceptional bilateral relations and the strong bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Turkey.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the 15th OIC Islamic Summit Conference in Banjul, The Gambia, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

"Expressing satisfaction with the positive momentum in bilateral relations, they reiterated their resolve to further deepen bilateral cooperation, with a particular focus on economic, trade, and defense sectors," it was added.

## 10 injured in road accident near Kot Radha Kishan

ISLAMABAD (APP): A devastating road accident occurred in Kot Radha Kishan when a bus carrying factory workers plunged into a ditch, leaving at least 10 people injured on Sunday.

According to rescue officials, the incident took place on Zafar Pathak, where the bus veered off the road and fell into a ditch.

Rescue teams rushed to the scene and shifted the injured to nearby hospital, said a private news channel.

## OIC SG calls for redoubling efforts against Israel's genocide

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Ibrahim Taha has urged the member states to redouble efforts to mobilize the responsibility of the international community towards stopping the aggression and genocide against the Palestinian people.

The OIC secretary general announced the establishment of a media observatory at the OIC General Secretariat to document and highlight, within the media, the numbers of martyrs, wounded, detainees, and various crimes of the Israeli occupation.

The OIC is also concurrently working towards activating the Legal Observatory to document Israeli crimes, in line with the decision of the recent Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh.

Furthermore, the secretary general reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to addressing pressing political and humanitarian challenges facing the OIC Member States.

He emphasized that the right to self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir remained a priority for the OIC.

## Impersonator arrested; wireless set and uniform recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police Secretariat police team arrested an impersonator and recovered a wireless set, uniform and MP5 rifle magazine from his possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Secretariat police team arrested an impersonator. Police team also recovered wireless sets, uniform and one MP5 rifle magazine from his possession.

## At least one passport office to stay open 24/7 in both Lahore, Karachi

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to keep at least one passport office open 24/7 in both Lahore and Karachi to provide ease to the people, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Sunday.

"This will make it easier for everyone to access passport services anytime," he said in a social media post on X.

With the implementa-

tion of this measure, individuals residing in Lahore and Karachi will have the flexibility to access passport services outside of regular business hours, accommodating diverse schedules and minimizing any inconvenience caused by time constraints.

The move is expected to significantly alleviate the burden on existing passport offices and reduce waiting times for applicants.

## SSP Traffic orders to maintain smooth flow of traffic on roads

ISLAMABAD: According to details, following the special directives of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the SSP Traffic Muhammad Sarfraz Virk orders officials to maintain smooth flow of traffic on roads, a public relations officer said.

He said that, SSP

officials to further enhance the capability of Islamabad Traffic Police and provide maximum facilities to the citizens.

He emphasized the need to enforce traffic laws with diligence and sincerity and take strict action against negligence and misconduct. The Traffic Police Education Wing will educate citizens on road safety

and traffic laws on various highways, he added.



Traffic conducted a meeting at Traffic Police Headquarters.

Moreover, he directed

and traffic laws on various highways, he added.