

# Independent

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Ruling alliance suffers major blow

## PA speaker suspends 27 MPs in light of SC's decision on reserved seats

Of 27 suspended MPs, 23 belong to ruling PML-N, two to PPP and one each to IPP and PML-Q. Speaker suspends members of 24 woman, 3 minority lawmakers.

LAHORE (INP): Following the Supreme Court's ruling on reserved seats after the nullification of the Peshawar High Court's verdict, the ruling alliance faced a major blow as their 27 lawmakers in the Punjab Assembly faced suspension on Friday.

After reading out the top court's verdict in the provincial legislative assembly, Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan suspended the memberships of 27 lawmakers who had been allocated reserved seats for women and minorities.

Twenty-three out of 27 lawmakers belonged to the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) whose number of seats in the House has been reduced to 203.

Subsequently, two lawmakers of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) faced suspension, as well as one each from the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) and

the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q). The speaker suspended memberships on 24 reserved seats for women and the other three for minorities.

The suspended Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) representing minorities in the Punjab Assembly include Tariq Masih Gul, Waseem Anjum and Basro Jee.

The suspended women MPs include Maqsoodan Bibi, Robina Nazeer, Salma Zahid, Kanwal Noman, Zeba Ghafoor, Saeeda Samreen Taj, Sheher Bano, Amna Perveen, Syed Sumera Ahmed, Uzma Butt, Afshan Hussain, Shagufta Faisal, Nasreen Rashid, Sajida Naveed, Farzana Abbas, Maria Talal, Tasheen Fawad, Abida Bashir, Saadia Muzaffar, Faiza Momina, Amira Khan, Samiya Ata, Rahat Afza and Ruksar Shafiq.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level review meeting regarding Ease of Doing Business.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, Ms Rubina Khalid, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Tarar for measures at global level to counter misuse of social media, spread of fake news

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar said on Friday that there was a need for measures at the global level to counter the misuse of social media and the spread of fake news.

"The Government of Pakistan recognizes the importance of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, and it is determined to protect the rights of journalists", he said while talking to a delegation of Bangladeshi journalists visiting Pakistan who met him here.

In the meeting, various important issues were discussed including freedom of expression and economic initiatives of the government.

The minister said that the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was fully focused on economic stability.

After the present government came to power, he said economic indicators were becoming positive, international journals were also predicting improvement in Pakistan's economy.

"The government is also taking steps to invest in infrastructure projects in Pakistan," the minister said adding these projects would not only boost the economy but also create employment opportunities.

The government, he said had established a special Investment Facilitation Council to attract foreign investment and facilitate investors.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was determined to provide relief to the people, he maintained.

Tarar said that the tax collection system was being improved in Pakistan, and in this context, tax reforms were being introduced in the Federal Bureau of Revenue.



MULTAN: Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with the different delegations at Circuit House.

## UN General Assembly votes to back Palestinian bid for membership; Pakistan backs

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The United Nations General Assembly Friday voted, by an overwhelming majority, to grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and called on the Security Council to favourably reconsider its request to become a full member of the UN.

The 193-member world body approved the Arab and Palestinian sponsored resolution by a vote of 143-9 with 25 abstentions.

Pakistan backed the resolution which "determines" that a state of Palestine is qualified for membership and recommends that the Security Council reconsider its request "favourably."

The renewed push for full Palestinian membership

in the UN comes as Israeli aggression in Gaza has put the more than 75-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict at center stage. At numerous Council and Assembly meetings, the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians in Gaza and the killing of more than 35,000 people in the enclave, have generated worldwide outrage over Israeli atrocities.

The United States vetoed a widely backed Council resolution on April 18 that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine, a goal the Palestinians have long sought and Israel, with the support of its powerful allies, has worked to prevent.

US Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood made clear on Thursday that the Biden administration opposed the Assembly resolution. The United States was among the nine countries voting against it, along with Israel.

Speaking before the vote, Pakistan's UN Ambassador Munir Akram said there would come a day when Israel would be held accountable for the crimes committed against Palestinians, especially in Gaza.

The insults hurled today - a reference to the highly provocative speech by Israel's UN Ambassador Gild Erdan - were "the arrogance of the aggressor", reflecting the impunity of the occupier, and trampling inherent and the UN Charter given rights of Palestinian people to self-determination, the Pakistani envoy said.

He expressed the hope that the international community would appropriately respond. "This is contrary to expectations of the member states, and standards and practice of the United Nations," Ambassador Akram remarked. The resolution's adoption, he added, would determine the widespread support for Palestine to be accorded full UN membership.

Israel, Ambassador Akram said, had refused the calls by the Assembly, by the Security Council and even by its patrons and friends, to halt the massacre of innocents and accept an immediate ceasefire. The Israeli leadership had reneged on negotiated deals for a ceasefire, he said, noting it had now initiated its

## PM tasks BOI to bring further EoDB for more investment, businesses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday tasked the Board of Investment with the target to bring more ease for attracting investment and pave way for more businesses in the country.

The prime minister, who chaired a high-level review meeting on Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) for investment and business activities, said the minimum impediments were a must to attract investment.

He told the meeting that during his previous tenure, he had taken priority measures to promote investment and business and that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had also played a supportive role in achieving the goals of economic revival.

He said the promotion of foreign investment and business activities in the country manifested the efforts by the government team for which they deserved an applause.

The prime minister said that the visits of business delegations from friendly countries and surge

## Pakistan's lunar satellite sends initial images from space

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's lunar satellite, iCUBE Qamar has sent the initial images from orbit after successfully completing three rounds of the moon.

The images were released by Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) on Friday.

The satellite, iCube Qamar has completed three lunar orbits after being launched aboard China's Chang'e-6 spacecraft from Hainan, China on May 03.

According to the Pakistan Institute of Space Technology (IST), Pakistan's lunar CubeSat iCUBE-Q was successfully deployed in orbit at 1314 hours on May 08 from Chang'E-6.

IST which is a leading high-end university of Pakistan had the distinct honor of launching a Cube

satellite in stock market reflected the trust of local and foreign investors in the government policies.

He instructed the BOI to formulate a mechanism on the pattern of one window operation in coordination with all the ministries and provincial governments.

He also called for the devising a strategy, in collaboration with the business community and provincial governments, to make the new investors and businessmen face minimum hurdles in their ventures.

He also instructed for engaging experts of international repute for the purpose.

Federal ministers Jam Kamal Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Abdul Aleem Khan, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, parliamentarians and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

The four provincial chief secretaries and prominent businessmen joined the meeting via video link.

## CPEC the crown jewel in China, Pakistan friendship, says Ahsan

BEIJING (APP): Calling the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) an exemplar of friendship between the two countries, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal said there has always been "spring" in the relations between Pakistan and China which are always moving on an upward trajectory.

CPEC, which was launched in 2013 and a flagship project under the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, has "benefited Pakistan's economy immensely", he said in Beijing.

Pakistan looks forward to further cooperating with China to seek shared economic growth as

CPEC has entered into its second phase, he added.

"The garden of friendship between Pakistan and China in every season has blossomed new and colorful flowers of cooperation and understanding between the people of Pakistan and China," the minister said.

Iqbal lauded CPEC for transforming the development landscape of, creating jobs for and building connectivity for his country, China Daily reported.

"CPEC has helped Pakistan transform its energy and infrastructure sectors and connect several parts of the country so the fruits of development can be shared across various regions of Pakistan," Iqbal said.

"It also helped create over two million jobs and helps Pakistan's workers master new technology and get trained in projects," he added.

Iqbal slammed the so-called debt trap narrative as far from reality and expressed appreciation for China's financial support which he said has been "very attractive financing for Pakistan".

Iqbal said China outlined five corridors under CPEC last year, namely growth, livelihood, openness, inclusivity and innovation, which were well aligned with S-E's framework, namely Export, Energy, Equity, E-Pakistan and Environment, envisioned by the government of Pakistan.



BEIJING: Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal participated in a seminar organized by Belt and Road Center of National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

## President summons NA session on 13th

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned the session of the National Assembly on Monday (May 13) at 04:00 pm.

The president summoned the session of the National Assembly in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 54(1) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

## PM condoles over demise of UAE's Sheikh Hazza bin Sultan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed grief over the demise of Sheikh Hazza bin Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the royal family of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The prime minister offered condolences to the UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and members of the royal family.

He prayed to Allah Almighty to bless the departed soul with eternal peace in paradise.

According to the UAE media, late Sheikh Hazza bin Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan was the son of Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who had died in 2019.

The body of the deceased was laid to rest at the Al Bateen cemetery in Abu Dhabi.

## Gilani urges pilgrims to maintain discipline, represent Pakistan with dignity in Saudi Arabia

MULTAN (INP): Addressing the Hajj pilgrims, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani expressed his satisfaction that Hajj operation has finally begun from Multan Airport.

This was the first flight which, chairman senate saw off from Multan Airport.

His address focused on the significance of the Hajj pilgrimage, the improved travel arrangements, and the importance of representing Pakistan with honor.

"It is a great pleasure to be here today to see off the pilgrims embarking on this sacred journey," said Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani.

"The journey from Multan to Madinah now takes just four hours, thanks to the opening of Multan Airport. Your journey has become much easier as a result, allowing

you to focus on your spiritual experience."

He urged the pilgrims to maintain discipline and represent Pakistan with dignity during their stay in Saudi Arabia. "Hajj pilgrims should conduct themselves with respect and order, ensuring they bring pride to our country," he said.

Chairman Senate also called upon the pilgrims to pray for the progress and prosperity of the country. "We are faced with the threats of terrorism and valiant soldiers and civilians have martyred while fighting against terrorists. Remember them in your prayers," he stated. He expressed gratitude to the security agencies, including the Airport Security Force and the Federal Investigation Agency, for their diligent work ensuring a safe environment for travelers.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Religious Affairs Zulafqar Haider along with Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan seeing off Hajj Pilgrims.



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Enrolment drive

In a promising albeit familiar declaration, the prime minister has announced a four-year "education emergency" to eradicate the blight of illiteracy and bring millions of out-of-school children into the classroom fold. While many governments have come and gone and such emergencies have been declared, obstacles to access, quality and equity in education persist, underscoring the need for a renewed commitment. The PM's stated resolve to personally oversee this initiative and to collaborate across provincial and political lines enhances hope but also raises the stakes for tangible outcomes.

Pakistan's education crisis is both deep-rooted and widespread. The statistics are sobering: the country grapples with a literacy rate of only 62pc and educational spending at a mere 1.7pc of its GDP. There are an estimated 26m children out of school and 70pc of 10-year-olds are unable to comprehend basic texts. Add to this the fact that a significant proportion of schools lack basic facilities such as potable water and toilets.

The disparity in educational access between urban and rural areas, and between boys and girls, further complicates matters. The authorities must prepare a solid plan of action if they truly aim to tackle this beast. First, increasing the allocation of GDP to education by the provinces and the centre is non-negotiable. This increase must be used judiciously to improve school infrastructure and ensure all children have access to basic educational facilities. Furthermore, teacher recruitment, training, and retention strategies must be overhauled to address the gap of 200,000 vacant teaching positions nationwide, as highlighted by Malala Yousafzai.

Additionally, the authorities should implement targeted interventions to bring out-of-school children, especially girls, into the educational system. Initiatives like the school meal programmes, as suggested by the World Food Programme, can be effective in increasing school attendance, while addressing nutritional deficiencies that affect learning.

The curriculum needs to be revamped to focus on foundational literacy and numeracy. Integrating technology can help bridge the gap between different regions and provide remote learning opportunities. Moreover, collaborative efforts with international partners and NGOs should be harnessed to bring best practices and funding to the fore. International organisations are poised to support, but they require a dispensation that is transparent and committed in its approach. Lastly, the commitment to establish the 'Pakistan Skill Company' and the 'Pakistan Skill Development Fund' is a step in the right direction. It acknowledges the broader spectrum of education beyond primary schooling, which is crucial for economic independence and growth. With a strategic, well-funded, and inclusive approach, it is possible to transform the educational landscape of Pakistan. It is hoped that the education authorities deliver an actionable plan that will stand the test of time and political change. For once, let this not be a missed opportunity.

### Crisis of empathy

Jan-e-Alam Khaki

There are many concepts that are shared by all human beings across the globe. One of them is empathy. Through many of my previous articles in these columns, I have focused on universal values, attitudes and beliefs that connect us to the core values of who we are as human beings, highlighting our humanness to promote universal brotherhood and sisterhood. In this, my 50<sup>th</sup> article for Dawn, I wish to dedicate this piece to a very cherished human concept — empathy.

'Empathy' is part of a family of words that denote a moral concept which goes beyond ordinary ethics, such as sympathy, affection, sharing feelings as if one feels the other person's pain. Empathy is generally described as the ability to take on another's perspective, to understand, and possibly share and respond to their experience.

Empathy can also refer to a sense of harmony between people with the same taste, disposition, or opinion. When a person feels empathy towards a cause or an organisation, they have feelings of approval, loyalty, or support. Sympathy, compassion and care are acts that belong to the family of empathy.

Meanwhile, the polar opposite of empathy are concepts like being unconcerned, remaining indifferent, apathy, or worse still, justifying the suffering of others. When a section of humanity — such as a person, a locality, a community, a nation or a state — falls prey to human or natural disasters, some who do not see them favourably feel that it is 'God's punishment', and that they deserved it. These kinds of

people, when they hear of or observe the suffering of others, are not disturbed.

On the other hand, there are others who, upon hearing or seeing the pain of others, 'feel' their suffering. If they can do something, they go forward and support them. If, on the other hand, they cannot do anything, they at least pray for the relief of their pain. Each one of us can have an introspective reflection to see which category we belong to.

Describing the value of empathy, the Aga Khan, a great humanitarian of our times, in an interview called it an "extraordinary ability", describing it as "... the ability to step away from ... [one's] own value system and put themselves in another person's shoes in order to better understand and help that person." Concluding his admiration for the quality of empathy, he said, "I deeply admire it as an irreplaceable talent that is unfortunately all too rare."

In order to develop this attitude, we need to encourage such attitudes in our children, family, in fact, within the larger community.

Today (not that it was less in the past), in our societies, where we tend to see too much brutality and savagery, we need to revisit our humanity and rethink what we have become.

It is not a communal or party or tribal quality; it depends on each person. It is an individual trait. Not all members in a family may feel the same way when they see human suffering; some feel more, others less. Educationist Farid Punjwani thinks there is an "empathy crisis" and argues that "without empathy, the edifice of ethics and human relations as a whole is inconceivable. And yet, we seem to suffer from a crisis of empathy at the collective level". Interestingly enough, probably all religions, communities and tribes value these feelings, but their adherents vary in actually adopting them in their daily lives. Some people are so conscious of the sufferings of others and feel so strongly about them that they establish institutions that help mitigate these travails to an extent. Many such inspired people do global humanitarian work regardless of colour, creed and ideology. They have saved millions across the globe. They live amongst us and deserve support from us.

A great woman served a literally untouchable community in a particular country for over 40 years, leaving her luxurious life in her own country. This is empathy personified. Is it really that impossible for each one of us to adopt this great quality no matter in how small a measure? Let us practise it in our daily life, demonstrate the same to our children, include it in our textbooks, and make it a part of the discourse in places of worship.

It is not just a job of teaching or preaching about human acts of empathy, but every one becoming conscious about the sufferings of fellow humans. As Sheikh Sa'adi rightly says: if you are unconcerned about the sufferings of others, you do not deserve to be called a 'human'. Indeed, being human means feeling the pain of others, and supporting them in whatever way possible. — Courtesy Dawn

### Farmers' march

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

It has been 20 years since the iconic peasant movement on the Okara military farms reached its zenith. Having been intimately involved with the struggle of tenant-farmers to secure their historic claims to 17,000 acres of prime agricultural land in the heart of Punjab, I can testify to the conscious effort made by the movement to remind society that peasants remain a political force in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, whilst also challenging taboos about the military's corporate interests.

Today, farmers are once again on the roads. Under the aegis of the Kissan Ittehad, thousands of landowning farmers are protesting the inexplicable decision to import millions of tonnes of wheat in the face of a bumper harvest at home. The refusal of the government to purchase home-grown produce at a reasonable price has resulted in a glut and major losses for many wheat farmers.

While centred in Punjab, the Kissan Ittehad mobilisation is far more geographically diverse than the peasant movement of two decades ago, which was based largely in Okara and revolved around the fate of tenant-farmers on state-owned land. It is also notable that the Okara protagonists were landless peasants demanding proprietary rights, whereas the present movement features owner-proprietors that are contesting agrarian policies.

This is not the first time that relatively prosperous middling farmers have taken to the roads. The Kissan Ittehad has been mobilising for some years now, taking up issues such as electricity costs (tube well use), seed, fertiliser and pesticide prices, as well as the erosion of agricultural support measures like guaranteed prices for

staple crops.

The poorest peasants — landless or owning a modicum of land — are, of course, also impacted by agrarian market logics, but the fact that even more comfortable farming segments are protesting underlines the changing contours of peasant politics.

While the struggles of small and middling farmers is in part due to the profiteering of middlemen — known as arthi and beoparis — agribusiness firms have come to play a dominant role in Pakistan's agrarian markets. These are companies — domestic and multinational — that try and exercise monopoly control in the supply (including patenting) of inputs and machinery, transportation and storage of produce, and the circulation of commodities.

Agribusiness garners astonishing annual government subsidies in North America and Western Europe. Its takeover of agriculture in countries like Pakistan has been less conspicuous, in part because, as is the case with the manufacturing sector, at least some multinationals subcontract to local firms.

Meanwhile the state has completely renege on support for peasant farmers, particularly smallholders. Autonomous government entities like the National Fertiliser Corporation and Punjab Seed Corporation have become largely toothless in the face of big private companies, as well as the policy dictates of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank and other donors that sing the praises of the 'free market' by eliminating support prices and facilitating agribusiness.

Of course, state functionaries engage in brazen pursuit of profit of their own accord when they feel like it.

The current wheat import scandal is a classic example, dictated by the (caretaker) federal government despite some opposition by the provinces. Former caretaker prime minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar claimed that the decision was good for consumers, conveniently neglecting mention of the private sector businessmen who were given licences to bring in the imp-or-ted stocks and earn windfall profits.

The rhetoric also confirms that government officials clearly prioritise urban 'consumers' over peasant farmers. A meaningful policy matrix would not be based on such a zero sum game between rural and urban; it is possible to ensure both that peasant-farmers are supported and urban consumers also catered to.

Last but not least, big landowners and rich farmers are not on the roads, in part because they operate like capitalist businessmen. They earn money through a host of diversified assets and then declare it as agricultural income, which is not taxed. That needs to change, as does the lack of regulation of agribusiness and middlemen.

More generally, the state must acknowledge its responsibilities towards small and landless farmers. Land reform, if undertaken in both agricultural and peri-urban areas where agriculture is being swallowed up by real estate mafias, could change the fate of almost 30 million peasants who are now landless, as well as pastoralists who have been almost completely industrialised as common lands are grabbed by state and capital alike.

Those who decide our fate will never take such steps on their own, so farmers will have to keep marching to force their hand. — Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### PM for trade policies to facilitate businesses and enhance export

Calls for strategy to evaluate performance of TIO in Pakistan embassies in other countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to formulate the trade policies with a core objective of facilitating the business sector, calling for urgent measures to enhance the competitiveness of the country's exports.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting on the trade sector, called for steps to promote exports of non-traditional goods and instructed for immediate payment of the certified duty drawback of the exporters.

Highlighting the significance of the private

sector, he instructed to ensure consultation with them during the policy-making and implement the deletion policy to uplift the auto sector. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the relevant ministry to devise a comprehensive strategy to scrutinize the performance of trade and investment officers posted in Pakistan's missions abroad, by rewarding the good performers and removing the incompetent ones.

The prime minister told the meeting that he would personally carry out the fortnightly review of the export sectors.

In the meeting, the prime minister was told that the discussion on the Free Trade Agreement between Pakistan and the Gulf states was in the final stage and transit trade agreements with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had already been materialized. It was told that during the recent Pak-Saudi Business Conference, around 450 business-to-business meetings were held and that the volume of e-commerce trade was witnessing a constant increase with the enlisting of over 3,000 firms on the Pakistan Trade Portal.

### Rupee gains 08 paise against US dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Friday gained 08 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.12 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.20.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, stood at Rs 277.10 and Rs 279.60 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.31 to Rs.299.93 from Rs 298.62, according to the latest economic data of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained constant at Rs 1.78 whereas an increase of Rs1.48 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 348.59 compared to the last closing of Rs 347.11.

The Emirates Dirham decreased by 03 paise whereas Saudi Riyal went down by 2 paise and were traded at Rs 75.72 and Rs 74.15 respectively.



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Sajid Manzoor Asadi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Mr. Bonhyun Koo, Director of the Asia Team, EDCP Mission signs an Aide-Memoire to chart a mid-term plan for implementation of development projects between 2024-2026. The signing was witnessed by Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and other officials from the MoEA and EDCP.

### Pakistan committed to promote green investment: Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD (APP): Highlighting Pakistan's vulnerability to the diverse effects of climate change, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Friday emphasized his country's commitment to addressing climate change and promoting green investment opportunities.

He was delivering a keynote speech via online platform at the UK-Pakistan Green Investment Forum, organized by the

British High Commission in Pakistan, said a press release issued by the finance ministry. He shed light on Pakistan's disproportionate vulnerability to the devastating impacts of climate change, despite its minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions.

He cited a recent World Bank study, estimating potential annual GDP losses of up to 1% due to climate-related risks.

### SBP provides practicable foundation for elimination of Riba: Chief Manager

FAISALABAD (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has provided a solid and practicable foundation for elimination of Riba by December 31, 2027, though still the share of Islamic banking is only 20pc in the overall banking sector. This was stated by Waqas Kashif Bajawa, Chief Manager SBP, while addressing an awareness session about Islamic export refinance scheme (IERS) at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He said regulation had been provided

for the Islamic banking in addition to finalising procedures to issue licences for Islamic banks. "Similarly, steps are also being taken for transformation of conventional banks into Islamic banks," he said and added that on the demand side, a comprehensive awareness campaign had been launched. "During these events, Sharia scholars try to remove the reservations and apprehensions of the people about the Islamic banking".

### PSX stays bullish, gains 427 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 427.45 points, a positive change of 0.59 percent, closing at 73,085.50 points against 72,658.05 points the previous trading day.

A total of 741,196,400 shares valuing Rs 25,268 billion were traded during the day as compared to 674,981,699 shares valuing Rs 24,053 billion the last day.

### Gold rates increase by Rs.4,600

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs.4,600 and was traded at Rs.243,800 on Friday against its sale at Rs. 239,200 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 3,944 to Rs 209,019 from Rs 205,075 whereas as the prices of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs 191,601 from Rs 187,986, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs.30 to Rs2,650 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.25.72 to Rs2,271.94.

### Pak, Korea sign Aide-Memoire for Enhanced Development Cooperation 2024-2026

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA) here on Friday signed an Aide-Memoire to chart a mid-term plan for implementation of development projects between 2024-2026. The Aide-Memoire, which was signed at the conclusion of visit by EDCP Country Programme Mission from the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM), represents a key milestone in deepening economic ties between Pakistan and the

Republic of Korea.

According to MoEA press release, the Aide-Memoire was signed by Joint Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Sajid Manzoor Asadi and Director of the Asia Team, EDCP Mission, Bonhyun Koo. The signing was witnessed by Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Dr Kazim Niaz and other officials from the MoEA and EDCP. Additionally, a project concept for the construction of a Pediatric Hospital in Jamshoro was signed, with EDCP committing USD 60 million.

### Atif Ikram says: Korea should benefit by investing in SEZs to increase regional ties

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Office Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Karim Aziz Malik meeting with Ambassador of South Korea Park Kajeon at the Federation Office. President FPCCI Atif Ikram said in his message regarding the meeting that Korea has benefited by

Pakistan is an important country in terms of investment for the world. Pakistan has important sectors like agriculture, gems and jewellery, mines and minerals, marble and granite, entertainment in which Korean investors can invest. Pakistan-Korea Joint Business Council will be formed soon. Chairman Capital



investing in CPEC projects and special economic zones to increase regional connectivity and free trade agreement for the promotion of trade has proved to be beneficial for both countries.

Pakistan, with a population of 240 million, is connected to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, due to which

Office Karim Aziz Malik said that bilateral trade between the two countries is one and a half billion dollars, which requires joint efforts to increase. Federation of Chambers of Pakistan, Trade Development Authority is organizing Gems and Jewellery Exhibition in September this year.



Kick off meeting between Karandaaz Pakistan, FBR and Ministry of Finance on Digitalization of tax system took place at FBR Headquarters in Islamabad.

### Short-term inflation eases by 1.39 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 1.39 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on May 09, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 312.56 points as compared to 316.95 points during the past week. As compared to

the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 22.32 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.99 per cent and went down to 303.24 points from last week's 306.26 points.



## Province's development link with maintenance of law & order: KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Commandant Frontier Constabulary, Moazzam Jah Ansari, called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, at the Governor's House on Friday to discuss the overall law and order situation in the province, including the merged districts.

The Governor praised the role of the Frontier Constabulary in security and law and order, emphasizing that development and prosperity rely on peace. He acknowledged the sacrifices of security forces, FC, and police in the fight against terrorism.

In a separate meeting, Chief Engineer PESCO, Akhtar Hamid Khan, also discussed electricity supply and load shedding with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor's House. The Governor directed the PESCO chief to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply and minimize load shedding.

Moreover, Opposition Leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Abadullah Khan, provincial assembly members Jalal Khan and Sardar Shah Jehan Yousaf, and former provincial president of Pakistan People's Party,



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain bidding farewell to pilgrims at Allama Iqbal International Airport.

## KP assembly passes over Rs1360.37bln surplus budget for eight months of FY 2023-24

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly on Friday passed a surplus budget of Rs1,360.37 billion for 11 months of the fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 including the last eight months of the interim government and the last two months of the current elected government.

The budget included Rs 1,059.276 billion in ongoing expenses and Rs 301.094 billion in development expenses. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Minister Aftab Alam Afridi presented the budget in the assembly session chaired by Speaker Babar Saleem Swati. He said in his speech that the current financial and economic difficulties have made this budget more difficult because, on the one hand, most of the infrastructure of the province was destroyed due to the disastrous floods of 2022 and on the other hand terrorism.

He said successive incidents have also adversely affected the

provincial economy, adding that under Article 126 of the Constitution, the caretaker government approved the expenditure for four months from July 1, 2023, to October 31, 2023 after that, the interim government, in consultation with the law department, also approved the expenditure for another four months, from November 1, 2023 to February 29, 2024.

Meanwhile, general elections were held on February 8, 2024.

## KP CM outlines measures for province development, prosperity

Independent Report DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Friday said the government was committed to improving law and order situation and overcoming the energy crisis.

Addressing a press conference here, he said that the provincial government was going to present a budget soon and the allocations of funds would be made according to priorities.

He said the government's first priority was related to the

improvement of the law and order situation in the province.

In this regard, he said work had already been started and there were specific districts with poor law and order situation which needed to be improved.

He said the health sector was being improved and health care facility had been restored.

He said that efforts were being made to improve the condition of government-run hospitals where people could get facilities under the health card system.



PESHAWAR: Police personnel's showing recovered artifacts to a media here at Police Line.

## 16 dead, 1,549 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 16 people were killed and 1,549 others injured in 1,434 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 655 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 894 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

## Inflation in Punjab reduces from 37 to 17 percent: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari on Friday said that inflation in Punjab had reduced from 37 to 17 percent. Addressing a press conference here she said that during two months the price of 20 kg flour bag had reduced by Rs 1,000.

She said that it had been a big challenge for the Punjab government to control price hike during the holy month of Ramadan but sincere effort was made to control it through 'Ramazan Nigheban Package'.

She said today she

was very happy to tell that the Punjab government succeeded in controlling inflation.

Azma Bukhari said that the common man was more concerned about bread not regarding the rate of dollar or GDP.

She further said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had taken landmark initiatives for the welfare of people during a short span of nine weeks.

She said that prices of various essential items including 'Roti', chicken, onion, tomato, potato and flour had reduced.

## Opposition decries hurriedly called session of KP Assembly

PESHAWAR (APP): The opposition members in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here Friday criticized government and protested the hurriedly called session of the assembly. The session was chaired by Speaker KP Assembly, Babar Salim Swati.

Criticizing government for ignoring the rules and procedures to call the session, they termed the holding of session unconstitutional. They said that it is impossible for members of remote areas to attend the session that was summoned hurriedly and contravening existing rules.



Commandant Frontier Constabulary Moazzam Jah Ansari calls on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor's House Peshawar.

## Secretary Human Rights Dept calls for setting up district level offices

HYDERABAD (APP): Secretary Sindh Human Rights Department Tehseen Fatima has said the role of police and district administration is pivotal for implementing human rights and creating awareness among the people about such rights. She said this while chairing a meeting at Shabbaz Hall of Shabbaz Building here on Friday. She said that the meeting discussed the rights issues, the procedure for registering complaints and the plan of setting up the department's offices at the district level.

The Secretary underlined the need to curb child

labour in addition to harassment of women and rape cases to protect the rights of the citizens and to improve the country's global image. The Commissioner Hyderabad Division Ahsan Ali Qureshi directed all the Deputy Commissioners to set up district-based offices and take steps to address the issues about human rights violations. During the meeting, all the DCs of 9 districts of the Hyderabad division were briefed about the state of human rights in their respective districts and assured that the department's district chapters would be established soon.

## All Pakistan University Libraries Convention held at Bahria University

KARACHI (APP): The librarians of universities of the country in their 1<sup>st</sup> All Pakistan University Libraries Convention, have emphasized on development and upgradation of libraries according to the needs of the digital age.

They also highlighted the role of university libraries for enlightening young generations by providing conducive atmosphere and latest literature. The convention was held in the Bahria University, Karachi in collaboration with all the professional associations of librarians including Pakistan Federation of Library

## Four killed in Bahawalpur road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four people, including three children were killed in a road accident on the Sutlej River bridge in Bahawalpur on Friday. According to rescue officials, the incident occurred after a speeding trailer hit a motorcycle. As a result, four people, including three children, got injured in the same accident. The rescue officials promptly responded to the accident, and the bodies of the deceased and injured have been transferred to the hospital.

# International News

## Israel strikes Rafah as talks yield no breakthrough

Monitoring Desk CAIRO: Israeli tanks and warplanes bombarded areas of Rafah on Thursday, Palestinian residents said, after President Joe Biden said the United States would withhold weapons from Israel if its forces mount a major invasion of the southern Gaza city.

A senior Israeli official said that the latest round of indirect negotiations in Cairo to halt hostilities had ended and Israel would proceed with its operation in Rafah and other parts of the Gaza Strip as planned.

Israel has submitted to mediators its reservations about a Hamas proposal for a prisoners' release deal and the Israeli delegation was returning from the Egyptian capital, the official added.

In Gaza, Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic

Jihad said their fighters fired anti-tank rockets and mortars at Israeli tanks massed on the eastern outskirts of the city.

Residents and medics in Rafah said an Israeli attack by a mosque killed at least three people and wounded others in the eastern Brazilian neighbourhood.

On the city's eastern edge, residents said a helicopter opened fire, while drones hovered above houses in several areas, some close to rooftops.

Israel claims Hamas fighters are hiding in Rafah, where the population has been swelled by hundreds of thousands of Gazans seeking refuge from bombardments elsewhere in the coastal enclave, and it needs to eliminate them for its own security.

One of the displaced, Mohammad Abder-

Rahman, said he feared the Israeli bombardments pre- saged an invasion of the city.

Ceasefire talks in Egypt's capital made some headway, but no deal was reached, according to two Egyptian security sources.

The Hamas delegation left for Doha for consultations, blaming Israel for the lack of agreement so far.

Israel has said it is open to a truce, but has rejected demands for an end to bombing as it has vowed to demolish Hamas.

Biden, who says Israel has not produced a convincing plan to safeguard civilians in Rafah, issued his starkest warning yet against a full ground invasion.

"I made it clear that if they go into Rafah, ... I'm not supplying the weapons," Biden told CNN in an interview on Wednesday.



Smoke billows from a building which caught fire after fresh Israeli attacks in the Zaytoun neighbourhood of Gaza City.

## Putin reappoints his prime minister, a technocrat who has kept a low political profile

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin reappointed Mikhail Mishustin as the country's prime minister on Friday, a widely anticipated move to keep on a technocrat who has maintained a low political profile. Mishustin and other technocrats in the Cabinet have been credited with maintaining a relatively stable economic performance despite bruising Western sanctions for Russia's role in Ukraine. Most other Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, though the fate of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu appeared uncertain.

In line with Russian law, Mishustin, 58, who held the job for the past four years, submitted his Cabinet's resignation on Tuesday when Putin began his fifth presidential term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration. Mishustin, the former head of Russia's tax service, steered clear of political statements and avoided media interviews during his previous tenure.

## Several dead in protests in Afghanistan

Monitoring Desk KABUL: Several people were killed when a demonstration broke out in eastern Afghanistan on Thursday after Taliban authorities ordered houses cleared to make way for a building construction, a provincial official said.

The Taliban authorities had ordered residents to vacate the land on the road between provincial capital Jalalabad and the border with Pakistan to make way for a new customs building, said Arafat Mohajer, the head of the information and culture department for the Torkham border point.

## Maldives moves to mend ties with India

Monitoring Desk NEW DELHI: The Maldives pledged "enduring friendship" with India on Thursday ahead of a deadline for New Delhi to withdraw a troop garrison from the luxury tourist destination that has strained ties between the neighbours. Pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu won office last year while campaigning on a promise to downgrade ties with India, and has since reoriented the strategically placed archipelago nation towards Beijing.

## UN to vote on resolution that would grant Palestine new rights and revive its UN membership bid

Monitoring Desk UNITED NATIONS: The U.N. General Assembly is expected to vote Friday on a resolution that would grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and call on the Security Council to favorably reconsider its request to become the 194<sup>th</sup> member of the United Nations. The United States vetoed a widely backed council resolution on April 18 that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine, a goal the Palestinians have long sought and Israel has worked to prevent, and U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood made clear Thursday the Biden administration is opposed to the assembly resolution.

Under the U.N. Charter, prospective members of the United Nations must be "peace-loving," and the Security Council must recommend their admission to the General Assembly for final approval. Palestine became a U.N. non-member observer state in 2012.

"We've been very clear from the beginning there is a process for obtaining full membership in the United Nations, and this effort by some of the Arab countries and the Palestinians is to try to go around that," Wood said Thursday. "We have said from the beginning the best way to ensure Palestinian full membership in the U.N. is to do that through negotiations with Israel. That remains our position." But unlike the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the 193-member General Assembly and the resolution is expected to be approved by a large majority, according to three Western diplomats.

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Protesters carry a Palestinian flag during the Stop Israel demonstration against Israel's participation in the 68th edition of the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), amid the ongoing conflict in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Malmo, Sweden.

## India's top court releases jailed Modi opponent

Monitoring Desk NEW DELHI: India's top court on Friday ordered a jailed opponent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be released on bail, allowing him to campaign in an ongoing national election.

Arvind Kejriwal, chief minister of the capital Delhi and a key leader in an opposition alliance formed to compete against Modi in the polls, was detained in March over a long-running corruption probe.

He is among several leaders of the bloc under criminal investigation, with one of his colleagues describing his arrest the month before the election as a "political conspiracy" orchestrated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Supreme court Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said Kejriwal could leave custody until June 1, the last day of voting in the six-week election.

## Ireland and Spain could recognise Palestinian state this month

Monitoring Desk DUBLIN/LJUBLJANA: Ireland and Spain alongside various European Union member states, are considering 'recognising' a Palestinian state on the 21 of May, according to a report published by Ireland's national broadcaster.

RTE News' stated on Wednesday evening that contacts between Dublin and Madrid and between Slovenia and Malta, had "intensified with a view to the countries jointly recognising" Palestinian statehood.

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## Philippines calls for expelling Chinese diplomats as South China Sea row escalates

Monitoring Desk MANILA: The Philippines' national security adviser called on Friday for Chinese diplomats to be expelled over an alleged leak of a phone conversation with a Filipino admiral in a significant escalation of a bitter row over the South China Sea. China's embassy in Manila had orchestrated "repeated acts of engaging and dissemination of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation", with the objective of sowing discord, division and disunity, Eduardo Ano said in a statement. Those actions "should not be allowed to pass unaddressed without serious penalty", he said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian called the comments provocative and said Chinese diplomats in the Philippines had to be allowed to do their job. "China solemnly requests the Philippine side to effectively safeguard the normal performance of duties by Chinese diplomatic personnel, stop infringing and provoking, and refrain from denying the facts," Lin said at a regular press briefing in Beijing.

The office of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and the foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The two countries have been embroiled in a series of heated standoffs this past year in disputed areas of the South China Sea as the Philippines, emboldened by support from the United States and other allies, steps up activities in waters occupied by China's vast coast guard.

China has accused the Philippines of trespassing and of treachery, while Manila has scolded Beijing for what it says is a policy of aggression and dangerous manoeuvring inside.

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## TTP should be handled through coordination with Afghan Govt: Gen Janjua

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former National Security Advisor, Lieutenant General @ Nasir Khan Janjua on Friday suggested that the way forward to deal with the challenge of cross-border terrorism, especially the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), was to proceed through the Afghan government. He was speaking at a seminar organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here.

He also underscored that for a better future, and ensuring a better partnership in the development of the region, the country needed to look at Afghanistan beyond the TTP factor, a news release said.

He also emphasized the need to see the cross-border terrorism threat in a larger canvas, adding that "today's challenges are direct outcomes of the conflicting ideologies of different countries and their maneuverings with the insurgent groups."

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Asif Ali Khan Durrani, Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan said that peace

in Afghanistan seemed a tall order for now, therefore we have to live with the neighboring country and manage our affairs with Afghanistan accordingly.

Ambassador Durrani also noted that "earlier, it was hoped that with the arrival of the Taliban, the security situation on the Pak-Afghan border would improve but unfortunately the TTP attacked emanating from Afghanistan had increased by 60 percent in the last two years.

Regarding Indian involvement in fomenting terrorism, he stated, "I have no qualms in saying that Indians are paying the TTP through the Afghan proxies, and it is not something new as Indians have been propping up the TTP since the Karzai government." He emphasized that the state should not negotiate with non-state actors.

Sharing his thoughts on the occasion, Dr Kaleem Imam, former IGP and counterterrorism expert, said that besides the TTP, several other militant organizations were actively involved in spreading insur-

gencies such as BLA, and BLF. He suggested that for countering each of these groups different strategies were required as one model could not apply to all, given the complex nature of militant networks and their ideologies. Zahid Hussain, renowned author and journalist said that what was happening after the return of the Taliban was not something surprising as it had been predicted well in time, but we were not prepared for it. He underlined that "it is not possible for the TTP to stay in Afghanistan without the support of the Afghan Taliban" and regretted that an incoherent approach had led to the failure of the state in countering the existential threat of terrorism.

He also impressed upon the need for clarity in policies towards TTP since fighting and negotiation could not go side by side."

Agreeing with Hussain, Gharida Farooqi, a senior journalist and anchor argued that it was impossible to develop a consensus out of "both confusion and 'clarity'."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visiting the under construction Model Prison.

## Mohsin Naqvi directs to complete construction work of Model Jail

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited the model jail under construction in Sector H of Islamabad and ordered to complete the construction work within six months.

During an inspection of under-construction jail, the minister observed that the project of construction of jail in Islamabad has been stalled for 13 year but now it will be completed in 6 months.

Naqvi tasked the officials concerned to complete the first phase of the prison construction in 6 months directing Chief Commissioner Islamabad and IG Islamabad Police to regu-

larly review progress on construction activities.

Keeping the project on hold for 7 year is clearly incompetence, Mohsin Naqvi observed, adding that the construction work in jail should continue day and night in the timeline.

The process of appointment of necessary staff should also be started immediately, he ordered adding that the provision of resources for the completion of the project will be ensured.

The minister gave instructions to the concerned authorities regarding the completion of the project under construction.

Chief Commissioner

Islamabad Mohammad Ali Randhawa briefed the minister about the project.

He said that the project to build a jail in Islamabad started in 2011 but even after many years, this project could not be completed.

He said that the jail will have a capacity of 2,000 prisoners however the capacity to hold two thousand more prisoners will be increased.

Federal Interior Secretary Khurram Agha, Chief Commissioner Islamabad Mohammad Ali Randhawa, IG Police Islamabad Contractors, Consultants and concerned officials were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary of BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, provides a briefing to Chairperson BISP, Ms. Rubina Khalid, on BISP's core and newly launched initiatives at BISP Headquarters on May 10, 2024. Additional Secretary BISP, Dr. Muhammad Tahir Noor, and all Director Generals of BISP are also present in the meeting.

## Rubina vows commitment to transparent governance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ms. Rubina Khalid, a prominent figure known for her advocacy in social welfare and community development, has officially taken the helm as the Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). In a heartfelt address to BISP employees, she underscored the significance of the program's namesake, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and pledged to uphold her legacy as a guiding light for the organization.

"Let people learn how to earn," declared Ms. Khalid in her inaugural address, encapsulating her vision for the empowerment of marginalized communities through education and economic opportunities.

She emphasized the

sacred nature of the Benazir Income Support Programme and its role in honoring the memory of Benazir Bhutto, whose mission continues to inspire their work.

Speaking passionately to the gathered staff, Ms. Khalid emphasized, "The name of Benazir Income Support Programme is sacred to me as it is named after our beloved Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, whose mission is our work."

She further urged employees to maintain the highest standards of integrity and transparency in serving the program's beneficiaries, who are predominantly orphans and widows. "We have a solemn duty to ensure that every penny reaches those who

need it most," she added.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of the BISP team, Ms. Khalid expressed her expectations for unwavering dedication and honesty. "I expect that we will work together with complete honesty as this is the money of poor people. We have to ensure transparency in payment disbursement, and I need your full support in this regard," she affirmed.

Prior to Ms. Rubina Khalid's address, Dr. Amjad Saqib, the former Chairperson of BISP, extended a warm welcome to her, praising her longstanding commitment to the welfare of the people. Dr. Saqib's endorsement further solidifies Ms. Khalid's reputation as a dedicated advocate for social justice.

## FIA foils mobile phone smuggling attempt at Islamabad Airport

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) immigration team at Islamabad International Airport successfully thwarted a mobile phone smuggling attempt on Friday, seizing a large cache of expensive mobile phones and other electronic devices.

According to FIA spokesperson, two passengers, identified as Babar Ayub and Muhammad Salman, arrived at the airport from Dubai and were intercepted by the agency

officials due to suspicious behavior.

Upon inspection, the team recovered 50 high-end mobile phones, 100 data cables, and three Apple MacBooks from their possession, a private news channel reported.

The smuggled mobile phones, worth millions of rupees, were cleverly concealed in packets of dates.

The FIA officials handed over the suspects to customs authorities for further investigation.

## AIOU inks MoU with PDC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Premium Diagnostic Center, Islamabad (PDC) to provide lab facilities to employees at discounted rates.

Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood presided over the ceremony. Dr. Nasir said that the welfare and good health of our employees and their families is our priority, healthy person always performs his duties with full zest.

## CDA chairman inspects ongoing development projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa visited ongoing development projects on Friday, focusing on completing maintenance work, landscaping, and ensuring cost-effective implementation.

The projects visited included Iran Avenue, Margalla Avenue, Margalla Avenue Extension from GT Road to M-1, and 10th Avenue, said a news release.

During his inspection of Iran Avenue, Muhammad Ali examined the median strips and surrounding landscaping. He instructed that the light poles installed along the Avenue should be aesthetically enhanced.

An official briefed the

Chairman about the Iran Avenue project, highlighting its 5.8-kilometer length with dual carriageways on both sides. Initially budgeted at Rs 3.9 billion, the project is now expected to be completed within Rs 3.5 billion. The chairman CDA also assessed Margalla Avenue, where maintenance work is nearing completion.

The official informed the chairman CDA that Margalla Avenue spans 10.5 kilometers with dual carriageways and is expected to be completed within a budget of Rs 2.6 billion. Muhammad Ali then visited Margalla Avenue Extension from GT Road to M-1, where a 3.5-kilometer road with dual carriageways is currently under construction.

## Certificates distribution ceremony of wireless training program held

ISLAMABAD: According to details, following the special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, a course on the maintenance of basic wireless communication equipment was organized in collaboration with the Interna-

lance the preparedness of the Islamabad Police wireless staff for maintaining and repairing fundamental wireless communication equipment.

In this regard, a certificate distribution ceremony of wireless training program was held at Police Lines Headquarters Islamabad.



The ceremony was attended by the CPO Safe City/Traffic, DSP Telecommunication, INL program officers, and other participants.

## Every possible facility being provided to Hajj pilgrims: Ch Salik Hussain

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Chaudhry Salik Hussain has said the government is providing every possible facility to Hajj pilgrims.

He was addressing the seeing-off ceremony in honour of 287 pilgrims at the Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport, here on Friday. Talking to pilgrims, he said they were going to be guests of Allah in the holy land and ambassadors of Pakistan, urging them to respect the Saudi laws and culture, and pray for themselves, their loved ones, and especially for Pakistan, and the Muslim world at large.

The pilgrims departed for Madina by Serene Air Flight ER-921 from Allama Iqbal International Airport. The minister said that those

going for Hajj were fortunate, and no amount of gratitude to Allah was enough. He expressed pride and honour in being present at this moment, emphasizing that it is a joyous occasion for him that, by Allah's grace, he was bidding farewell to his guests for the journey to the holy land.

The federal minister said he himself would depart in three or four days and assess the arrangements there personally. He assured that every possible step will be taken to address any issues faced by Pakistani pilgrims in Saudi Arabia and to provide them with facilities.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain said that the Saudi government offered VIP Hajj facilities to him, but he chose to stay with his country's pilgrims.

## Unified efforts to combat dengue in twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioners of Islamabad and Rawalpindi on Friday chaired a high-level meeting here at DC Office which was aimed at synchronizing strategies for dengue prevention in the twin cities. According to the Spokesman of ICT Administration, the administrations of Islamabad and Rawalpindi have joined hands, in a bid to curb the spread of dengue fever.

The meeting was attended by administrative officers, district health officers, and the CEO of DHA Rawalpindi. Additionally, representatives from CDA, MCI, and relevant departments also participated in the meeting.

The primary focus of the discussions was on col-

laborative action plans, with particular attention to border areas shared by the two districts. Joint operations will be conducted to target these regions, aiming to eliminate dengue larvae and halt the transmission of the disease. The decision to coordinate efforts reflects a proactive approach by the authorities to address the pressing issue of dengue fever. By pooling resources and expertise, Islamabad and Rawalpindi aim to bolster their defenses against the disease, safeguarding the health and well-being of residents across both cities.

These unified efforts against dengue are a significant step toward the ongoing battle to protect communities from vector-borne diseases.

## Houbara Bustard SC fixes for hearing petitions filed against hunting

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has fixed for hearing petitions filed against the hunting of Houbara Bustard.

A bench has been constituted to hear the petitions against the hunting of Houbara Bustard.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa will hear the petitions, on May 17.

Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan are members of the bench.

It is pertinent to mention here that SC has already conducted hearing with reference to this case. It had imposed ban on the hunting of Houbara bustard.

## Meezan Bank, Roche Pakistan join forces to combat breast cancer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Meezan Bank, Pakistan's first and largest Islamic Bank, has joined hands with Roche Pakistan, one of the world's leading biotech companies, in an initiative aimed at alleviating the financial burden of breast cancer treatment for patients across Pakistan.

Breast cancer remains a critical health challenge in Pakistan, claiming numerous lives and impacting

countless families each year, said a news release.

Recognizing the urgency of addressing this pressing issue, Meezan Bank has pledged its unwavering support to ease the financial strain associated with diagnosis, medication, and therapy for affected individuals and their families. The primary aim of this sponsorship is to offer the finest medical services to breast cancer patients.

## Islamabad Police arrest 6 POs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Police arrested six proclaimed offenders (POs) and absconders involved in heinous crimes, a police spokesperson said on Friday.

According to the spokesperson, on the special directives of Inspector General of Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, an operation was underway in Islamabad to arrest absconders and target offenders involved in heinous and property crimes.



ISLAMABAD: Commuters drive at Islamabad Highway during heavy rain in morning hours in the Federal Capital.

## Senior adviser says: Wafaqi Mohtasib providing prompt relief to citizens on complaints against agencies

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) is providing expeditious and free-of-cost relief to citizens on their grievances against the federal government agencies, Senior Adviser Abdul Moiz Bukhari has said.

The official expressed these views at a briefing to the interns of Associated Press of Pakistan's youth media training programme during their visit to the Ombudsman Secretariat.

Bukhari said Wafaqi Mohtasib was contributing to good governance in public departments through its verdicts ensuring the principles of "fairness, transparency and integrity".

In 2023, he said, action was taken on a record number of 194,099 complaints registered against government departments, out of which 193,028 were addressed.

He said the Mohtasib received 49,190 online and 22,321 complaints through mobile application, witnessing a 47 and 21 percent increase compared to 2022, respectively. An action was taken on a record number of 202,367 complaints received from overseas Pakistanis, he added.

Besides use of technology, he said, new regional offices, Khuli katchehris (open courts), unconventional modes of mediation and visits of inspection teams proved helpful in resolution of complaints.

The senior adviser said a review appeal could be lodged by any party against the decision of Wafaqi Mohtasib, which is settled within 60 days. If unsatisfied with decision, an appeal can be made to the President of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Children are enjoying swings at Japanese Park during pleasant weather after the rain in the Federal Capital.

## SC fixes govt's plea against verdict in NAB amendments case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday fixed govt's plea challenging the verdict in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendments case for hearing.

On September 15, 2023, the Supreme Court of Pakistan struck down amendments made to National Accountability Bureau laws as it announced its reserved verdict on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder's plea.

A five-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa will take up the plea on May 14.

Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Mandokhail, Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Hassan Azhar are also part of the bench. The SC registrar's office has served notices to the

respondents for May 14.

The federal government filed the review plea in the NAB amendments case under the SC Practice and Procedure Law and made the Federation of Pakistan, National Accountability Bureau and PTI founder respondents.

Citing no violation of basic rights with the NAB amendments, the federal government pleaded with the SC to nullify its decision in the case. "Legislation is the right of the Parliament," the plea said.

In a majority 2-1 verdict, the top court approved Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's petition challenging amendments made to the country's accountability laws during the tenure of the previous Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government.

## Twin-cities receive rain, turns weather pleasant

ISLAMABAD (INP): Rain in twin cities Islamabad and Rawalpindi made weather pleasant on Friday.

The showers and hailstorm broke the spell of heat wave and Islamabad is still under the cloud cover. It also rained in Attock and some other parts of Punjab where wind made the weather pleasant.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Mansehra district, people heaved a sigh of relief as rain brought the temperature down. The Meteorological Department says the rainy weather will continue till Saturday.

A rain-generating system is expected to enter Balochistan on Friday and showers are likely to fall in nine districts. The Met office says weather will remain mild due to rain on May 10 and 11.