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Anti-smuggling activities to remain continued

## Genuine issues of transporters to be resolved: CM

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti says protest is constitutional right, but terms blocking of highways as illegal act, warns law would take its course on causing inconvenience to people

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that the genuine issues of transporters would be resolved, however anti-smuggling activities would remain continued.

The Chief Minister said that protest is a constitutional right but blocking of highways is an illegal act.

He asserted that the law would take its course on causing inconvenience to the people and action would be taken.

The joint action would remain established, however Levies and Police are not authorized for anti-smuggling search.

The Chief Minister was speaking to the representative delegation of transporters who called on him here on Saturday.

The provincial Minister for Food, Ali Madad Jatak, Member Provincial Assembly, Mir Liaquat Ali Lehri, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Commissioner Quetta,

Continued on page 2



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding wheat procurement.

## Measures being taken for improving good governance in Balochistan: CM Bugti

### Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that measures are being taken for bringing improvement in governance in the province.

He regretfully pointed out that junior officers use political influence for posting on the senior posts. He said that the governance system is facing destruction because of non-implementation on the prescribed policies and rules.

It's because of the corrupt practice that governance suffered a lot.

These and similar other views were expressed by the Chief Minister while speaking to the representative delegation of Balochistan Civil Service Officers Association (BCSOA), who called on him here on Saturday.

The Chief Minister on the occasion pointed out that it is bitter reality that

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PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti greets newly appointed Governor Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi

## PTA opposes blocking of 500,000 non-filers' SIMs

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has opposed blocking of sim cards of over 500,000 tax non-filers.

In a letter to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), PTA stated that blocking these SIMs would not be in line with their system.

PTA noted that a large number of women use mobile SIMs which are registered against men's names. They stated that no restrictions are being imposed on the issuance of new SIMs to non-filers.

The telecommunication authority also questioned

the procedure for restoring the SIM cards of those who come under the tax net.

The authority clarified that they are not legally bound to block SIMs and blocking SIMs would also harm digitalization and the telecom economy.

However, instead of such steps, PTA suggested FBR explore more options within the legal jurisdiction.

The PTA comments came after the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) issued an income tax general order on April 30, calling the authorities to block the SIM cards of more than 506,000 identified non-compliant taxpayers across the nation

## JUI-F decides to launch anti-govt movement sans PTI

PESHAWAR (Online): JUI-F has decided to launch a separate anti government movement instead of forging alliance with PTI.

The major reason behind the lack of trust between PTI and JUI-F is Chief Minister (CM) KP Ali Amin Gandapur.

JUI-F expressed annoyance over recent statement of CM KP.

On this base JUI-F decided to launch anti gov-

ernment movement without PTI.

Sources said following the statement of KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur JUI-F

is of opinion that the people who contact and talk has no mandate for it. In this situation we don't need PTI and instead we will launch movement against government separately. PTI should forge unity in its ranks first and then contact us.



QUETTA: A representative delegation of transporters meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti

## Pakistan can outperform India or even a greater economy with hard work: PM Shehbaz

Says around three-time of the annual revenue target was "going down the drain" due to corruption; Nations which believe in reward, punishment make progress. Terms revenue collection as a "big challenge".

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Stressing the need for expanding revenue collection, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that Pakistan would leave India or even a greater economy for behind with hard work.

His remarks came as the cash-strapped country's tax evasion (revenue gap) was estimated to be around Rs5.8 trillion on an annual basis of fiscal year 2022-2023, which makes 6.9% of the GDP, according to The News.

On the other hand, India collected a record \$25.15 billion as gross goods and services tax (GST) in April, recording a 12.4% surge from the same period last year, New Delhi claimed this week, according to Reuters.

Addressing a ceremony to award shields to the honest, hardworking and efficient officers of the Federal Board

of Revenue (FBR), PM Shehbaz said that the country had the potential to collect revenues of over Rs24 trillion against the annual tax target of Rs 9.4 trillion.

He said an amount of around three-time of the annual revenue target was "going down the drain" due to corruption, inefficiency and negligence.

The premier said that the nations which believed in reward and punishment made progress.

Pakistan was facing various challenges, the premier said, adding: "Revenue collection is a big challenge. Neighbouring countries are far ahead of us." Lashing out at the corrupt practices, the country's chief executive said: "Recoveries that should add to the national exchequer are prone to corruption and fraud." Continued on page 2

## President approves appointments of Governors

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has accorded his approval to the appointment of Governors for Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces.

After approval, Sardar Saeem Haider Khan has been appointed as Governor Punjab, Faisal Karim Kundi as Governor KP and Jaffar Khan Mandokhel as Governor Balochistan, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Saturday.

The president approved the appointments under Article 101 (1) of the Constitution of Pakistan.

## Security forces kill six terrorists in North Waziristan operation

RAWALPINDI (PR): Security forces have killed six terrorists in an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists during the operation conducted on reported presence of terrorists in the area.

Terrorists' hideout was also busted during the operation.

The killed terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as target killings of innocent civilians in the area.

Sanitization operation is being conducted in the area by the security forces, who remain determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country.



RAWALPINDI: Boxing Legend Amir Khan and Martial Arts Champion Shahzaib Rind meeting with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir at General Headquarters.

## Wheat import scandal PM directs secretary cabinet to put final report till Monday about inquiry

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has ordered for complete transparent investigation into wheat import scandal.

Secretary cabinet Kamran Ali Afzal head of team investigating into wheat import scandal called on PM and discussed the matter with him.

He also informed PM about the hindrances on the way to the investigation.

PM directed secretary

cabinet to hold transparent investigation into what import scandal.

PM directed cabinet secretary to work out recommendations putting before him available record and documents besides submitting final report till Monday.

During the meeting PM directed that responsibility be fixed and he should be informed thereof. We will put before the nation every thing.

## May 9 was a planned conspiracy: Khawaja Asif

SIALKOT (APP): Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that military installations and properties were attacked under a planned conspiracy of a political party on May 9.

Addressing a press conference at his residence, he said the Corps Commander House Lahore, Mianwali Air Base and GHQ Rawalpindi were attacked under a plan. "There have been differences of political parties with the establishment throughout our history and it was expressed from time to time.

However, it was the first time that a political party expressed its anger after a vote of no-confidence was passed against it," he added.

He said, "The evidence was recorded by the media in the form of videos and hundreds of people were arrested and it was a day in which the red line was crossed. Ideological and political differences have their place but one political party decided all the targets under joint planning with its leadership. The way these people reached

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LAHORE: Amir Jamaat-i-Islami Hafiz Naemur Rehman, Chairman PkMAP Mehmood Khan Achakzai, Asad Qaiser, Hamid Khan Advocate and other talking with mediemen

## Pak, Saudi Arabia reaffirm resolve to further enhance economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday held a bilateral meeting with the Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on the sidelines of the 15th OIC Islamic Summit Conference, in Banjul, The Gambia.

Noting the importance of the long-standing strategic and economic relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Saudi Foreign Minister reaffirmed the resolve to further enhance economic cooperation and Saudi investments in Pakistan.

The Deputy Prime Minister lauded the "Vision 2030", which aimed at socio-economic transforma-

tion of the Kingdom in the 21st century.

He stated that the recently held visit of the Saudi Foreign Minister to Pakistan, who was leading a high-powered delegation, represented a new momentum in economic collaboration between Pakistan and the Kingdom, according to a press release issued here.

Deputy PM Dar and the Saudi Foreign Minister expressed deep concern over the recent developments in the Middle East and called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

They also noted the important role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on issues concerning the Muslim Ummah including the situations in Palestine and Kashmir.



GAMBIA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar meeting with the Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on sidelines of 15th OIC Islamic Summit Conference, in Banjul

## Qaisar Sheikh inaugurates Free Zone Agriculture Industrial Park in Gwadar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaisar Ahmed Sheikh inaugurated the Free Zone Agriculture Industrial Park in Gwadar on Saturday.

The inauguration ceremony of Free Zone Agriculture Industrial Park was held at China Business Center which was attended by the Chairman Gwadar Port Authority, Pasand Khan Buledi, Chairman China Overseas Port Holding Company besides others.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs said that he has come to Gwadar on special directives of the Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif.

He said that the objective behind his visit is to inspect the under completion projects and get accelerated the work on them.

He said that most important projects have reached to the completion for people of Gwadar.

He hoped that the work of connecting the water of desalination plant to Gwadar city would be completed soon.

The Chairman China Overseas Port Holding Company on the occasion said that Pak and China are doing exemplary work on the projects of Pak China Economic Corridor.

He said that he feels proud on the friendship of Pakistan and China seeing the completed projects.

## Kakar pins wheat import blame on interim provincial govts

ISLAMABAD (INP): After "wheat import scandal" opened a new Pandora box prompting high-level probe, ex-caretaker prime minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar pinned the blame for importing the commodity on the then-interim provincial governments.

In a statement, Anwaarul Haq Kakar ruled out his role in the prevailing crisis and stressed that "it's not a job of a prime minister to oversee wheat production".

The former premier noted that only 3.4 million metric tonnes of the said crop was imported whereas the shortage was of 4 million metric tonnes.

He alleged that the bu-

reaucrats who created the artificial demand are still present in the provinces, holding them responsible for the current crisis.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formed a fact-finding committee to ascertain the irregularities in the wheat import last year despite a "bumper crop", exceeding the stock leaving Balochistan and Punjab governments unable to purchase the crop from the farmers.

The prime minister asked the relevant officials about the import of wheat last year and why the decision was taken to import the commodity despite foreseeing a bumper crop.



## Rise in cigarette prices, 18% Pakistanis quit smoking: CRD Survey

ISLAMABAD (INP): Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD), a Pakistan-based think tank in its recent survey has revealed that following significant increase in cigarette prices, 18 percent of people in the country have quit smoking.

Director CRD, Maryam Gul Tahir said that results of survey have demonstrated that tax hikes promise a win-win for both the public health and the government revenue.

High tobacco taxation serves as a vital measure in combating tobacco consumption, as was advocated by the World Health Organization (WHO), the survey findings underscored. Historically, the tobacco industry in Pakistan has wielded considerable influence, particularly from multinational corporations.

However, the decisions in the recent past signal a corrective shift in policy aimed at prioritizing public health over industry interests.

In this respect, the government increased Federal Excise Duty (FED) rates after years of stagnation. The policy shift not only safeguards public health but also serves as a fiscal measure to alleviate the economic

burden associated with smoking-related healthcare costs.

Last year, in February, the Finance (Supplementary) Act of 2023 saw FED rates spike by 146 percent for economy brands and 154 percent for premium brands, marking a significant departure from previous policies.

This strategic decision has already demonstrated tangible outcomes, with cigarette consumption showing a marked decline. A report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recognized this positive trend, noting a 20-25 percent reduction in cigarette consumption following the tax hike. The survey findings not only highlight the decline in overall consumption but also reveal a shift in behavior among smokers.

Around 15 percent of respondents reported reducing their cigarette intake due to the increased prices. This collective response has contributed to an estimated reduction of over 11 billion cigarette sticks in consumption.

According to details, the total consumption of cigarettes in Pakistan ranges from 72 to 80 billion sticks annually, inclusive of vari-

ous sources such as officially produced, smuggled, and untaxed products.

"We urge the government to consolidate the gains and continue the policy of increasing cigarette prices to sustain the decline in consumption," Maryam said. She said that Pakistan was still lagging behind from the regional countries and rest of the world as cigarettes prices were still cheaper when compared with others.

The call for intensified taxation aligns with international guidelines, notably the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), which emphasizes the correlation between increased prices and reduced consumption.

The IMF has advocated for a uniform taxation structure on tobacco products to further curtail consumption and boost government revenue.

Similarly, the World Bank pointed out "A significant revenue gain of 0.4 percent of GDP (PKR 505.26 billion) could be achieved by applying the current rate on premium cigarettes (Rs. 16.50 per cigarette) to standard cigarettes as well."



PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court, Mr. Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim administering oath to newly appointed Governor Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi during oath taking ceremony held at Governor House

## Pakistan downs hosts Malaysia in Azlan Shah Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's national hockey team made a triumphant start in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, defeating hosts Malaysia by 5-4 in a thrilling match on the first day on Saturday.

Sufiyan Khan, Pakistan's drag flicker, scored a hat-trick, while Zakriya Hayat and Abu Bakar Mahmood contributed one goal each to the team's victory.

The Pakistan hockey

team would face Korea in their second match on Sunday (May 5).

This win was a significant boost for the Pakistan team, and they would look to carry this momentum forward in the tournament.

The Sultan Azlan Shah Cup was a prestigious international hockey competition, and Pakistan's participation is a testament to the country's rich hockey heritage and talent.

## Naqvi wants new floodlights, enhanced facilitation at stadiums

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi has sought a feasibility report to install new floodlights at main cricket stadiums in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi as part of upgradation plans for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

Presiding over a meeting at the PCB headquarters, Gaddafi Stadium here on Saturday, he ordered for enhancing seating capacity at the National Bank Stadium, Gaddafi Stadium and Rawalpindi stadium, adding that the digital scoreboards and live-streaming screens should also be replaced for better view. Bids from international bidders for re-vamping of stadiums would be opened on May 7. The PCB chairman also ordered for infrastructural changes to the hospitality boxes, increased seats at the enclosures and improved facilities for spectators.

## Genuine issues....

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Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat and representatives of the transporters were present in meeting.

The Chief Minister on the occasion directed to Home Department not stop the passenger buses at the joint check posts for more than 15 to 20 minutes.

He also directed to send the buses to their respective destinations soon after completing the necessary process in view of the public hardships.

Meanwhile, during the course of meeting, it was also decided one security personnel would be present in every vehicle for protection of the life and property of passengers.

It was also decided to ensure ban on the instructions by the government in the public interest.

## Pak Army organizes free medical camp at Sheikhpura

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a commendable effort to serve the local community, the Pakistan Army organised a free medical camp catering to the residents of Chauhan and nearby villages near Sheikhpura.

Led by dedicated doctors and paramedical staff, including gynaecologists, the camp provided essential medical examinations and treatments to hundreds of individuals, pvt reported. Approximately 800 patients availed themselves of the medical services offered at the camp, including various diagnostic tests such as ECG.

Beyond immediate medical care, attendees received invaluable insights through awareness lectures on hygiene, balanced diet, and disease prevention, notably focusing on combating ailments like dengue. The initiative received widespread appreciation from the local populace, who lauded the Pakistan Army's consistent efforts in organising such vital healthcare interventions in rural areas. Gratitude flowed towards the Army for their ongoing commitment to public welfare, symbolising a tangible embodiment of service to the community.



CALIFORNIA: Group photo of California's Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, Ambassador Masood Khan and Consul General Asim Ali Khan, Los Angeles.

## Pakistan can outperform India....

Continued from page 1

"We are compelled to seek loans and approach IMF."

Hinting at harsh accountability in the FBR, the premier said: "We will 'separate the white from the black' on the reports of agencies and the input of the organisation."

"Justice is decided on the basis of merit," the PM said, adding that the government would not show leniency to the corrupt officers.

"Shields are awarded [to the FBR officials] on merit."

Promotion would be given to the official on the basis of merit, he vowed.

As regards the amount worth Rs 2.7 trillion held up across various appellate forums, including commissioners' appeals, Appellant Tribunal Inland Revenue (ATR) and various courts, he said now the law had been made to recover such amounts.

"Rs2700 billion were stuck at various forums, if even half of the amount is returned, is this a bad deal?"

Pointing to another Rs 756 billion sales tax scam recently uncovered by the FBR, the prime minister said he had directed the authorities concerned to make every possible to recover such looted money.

Earlier, the prime minister gave away the shields to the honest and hard working officers of the FBR and said that he was feeling proud that the country had plenty of such honest officers which could play their due role in development and prosper-

ity of the country.

APP adds: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the country had the potential to collect revenues of over Rs 24 trillion against the annual tax target of Rs 9.4 trillion.

He said that an amount of around three-time of the annual revenue target was 'going down the drain' due to corruption, inefficiency and negligence. This huge amount, he said could be utilized to pay debts, construct hospitals, schools, universities and roads in the country.

Addressing a ceremony to award shields to the honest, hardworking and efficient officers of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) here, the prime minister said that time had come to separate white from the black and to take decisions of reward and punishment purely on merit as no nation could develop without strictly following the discipline criteria for the government officials.

The prime minister pointed out that Pakistan was facing multiple challenges including low tax to GDP ratio and external and internal debts that were increasing every passing day.

As regards the amount worth Rs 2.7 trillion held up across various appellate forums, including commissioners' appeals, Appellant Tribunal Inland Revenue (ATR) and various courts, he said now the law had been made to recover such amounts.

He said that under the new law, the ATR members, equivalent to the high court judges would be ap-

pointed through an open competition and their tests and interviews would be conducted through reputable institutions such as LUMS, IBA etc.

He said that those members would also get high perks and privileges equivalent to the senior judges.

Pointing to another Rs 756 billion sales tax scam recently uncovered by the FBR, the prime minister said that he had directed the authorities concerned to make every possible to recover such looted money.

Earlier, the prime minister gave away the shields to the honest and hard working officers of the FBR and said that he was feeling proud that the country had plenty of such honest officers which could play their due role in development and prosperity of the country.

He said all the politicians, bureaucrats and heads of the organizations should work together for the development of the country.

He said that the only aim of this ceremony was to encourage the country's heroes, who worked hard with honesty to meet the targets of the taxes.

"This factor would multiply in future and the officers would be fully acknowledged only on the basis of their honesty, efficiency, hard work and sincerity toward the nation," he added.

As regards, the track and trace system, the prime minister emphasized that it was one of the major fraud in the country's history.

## High-level Saudi trade delegation to reach Pakistan today

ISLAMABAD (INP): A high-level trade delegation from Saudi Arabia is scheduled to arrive in Pakistan on Sunday (tomorrow) to explore investment opportunities in different sectors as well as to forge strong bonds with local entrepreneurs.

According to Petroleum Minister Musadiq Malik, the 50-member delegation includes representatives of about 35 companies in the Kingdom representing various economic sectors.

The minister said 76 Pakistani business companies have been shortlisted in this regard, adding that cooperation between Islamabad and Riyadh will be increased at the government and private levels.

The ministry had se-

lected a large number of Pakistani companies in the respective sectors whose officials would have business-to-business meetings with their Saudi counterparts, and would hopefully enter into business and investment deals, he added.

Earlier, the Ministry of Commerce official had said the business delegation would also participate in the Pak-Saudi Investment Conference.

He said that Saudi Arabia was an oil-based economy with strong government controls over major economic activities, however, it was now undergoing a transformation to reduce oil dependence, diversify income sources and enhance competitiveness under the Vision 2030.

## Boxer Amir Khan honored as Captain for a Day by Pakistan Army

RAWALPINDI (APP): Famous boxer Amir Khan has been awarded with the honorary rank of captain for a day



by the Pakistan Army in recognition of his achievements in the field of boxing

On this occasion, Boxer Amir Khan said Pakistan Army has always played an important role in the promotion of sports.

He said that he would continue to play his role for the promotion of sports in Pakistan.

He also expressed his intention to open more boxing academies in Pakistan to train young boxers.

## Ex-New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson to represent USA in T20 World Cup

WASHINGTON (INP): The USA Cricket announced on Saturday that former New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson will be joining the national team squad

for the upcoming T20 World Cup in June. Anderson, who notably played for New Zealand in the 2015 50-overs World Cup final against Australia and represented them in two T20 World Cups, last played for his home country in 2018. His debut for the USA team took place during the recent home T20 series against Canada. The 33-year-old Anderson's inclusion will add experience to the 15-member squad, which will be

led by wicketkeeper-batter Monank Patel

The USA team will engage in a series of preparatory matches. Before their World Cup campaign kicks off on June 1 against Canada in Dallas, the US are scheduled to play three T20 internationals against Bangladesh in Houston, gearing up for the challenge ahead. Monank Patel (captain), Aaron Jones (vice-captain), Steven Taylor, Corey Anderson, Saurabh Netravalkar, Jessy Singh, Harmeet Singh, Noshush Kenjige, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Nitish Kumar, Andries Gous, Shayan Jahangir, Ali Khan, Nisarg Patel, Milind Kumar.

## FWO completes clearance operation on Karakoram Highway

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Frontier Works Organization (FWO) has completed its clearance operation along the Karakoram Highway, restoring access to 56 critical points which were blocked by landslides.

Heavy rains had prompted the closure of the highway at these junctures, causing significant inconvenience to commuters.



QUETTA: Former Provincial Minister Sardar Yahya Khan addressing a press conference about resignation from JUI

## Measures being taken for...

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the officers who remain strict to the principles suffer.

Most part of service of such officers spends as "OSD", he added.

The Chief Minister was of the strong view that the junior officers should not come on the position of their seniors for personal gains.

He stressed that there is a dire need to uphold eligibility and merit at every cost.

In this regard, counselling of the officers is very much needed, he maintained.

Mir Saifraz Ahmed Bugti on the occasion exhorted the officers not let anyone use them in the matters against law.

They should have courage to say wrong things as wrong and right things as right.

It is not fair to make compromise on the principled stance and hurt the professional dignity, adding he stressed.

He stressed that we have to empower the administrative officers so as to resolve the public issues.

The officers having good administrative capabilities would be encouraged, he added.

He also said that the result-oriented steps would be taken for improving civil services in the province.

The President of BCSOA, Mujeeb Rehman Qambrani said that we fully support the initiatives of Chief Minister for improving governance and bringing reforms in the province.

He said that we are with the vision of Chief Minister for prevention of corruption and irregularities.



GAMBIA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar meets with his Nigerian counterpart Bakary Yaou Sangare on the sidelines of the 15th Islamic Summit in Banjul.

## PCB mulls holding PSL 10 from April to May next year due to Champions Trophy

Sports Desk  
LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is considering holding the 10th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) from April 7 to May 20 next year due to the Champions Trophy, slated to happen in February.

According to the details, the meeting was held between the PCB and fran-

chise owners to review the 10th edition of the marquee tournament.

The PCB had given proposals to develop more interest in the country's premium tournament. The PCB had proposed to hold matches of the PSL in Karachi, Multan, and Rawalpindi.

Apart from that, the PCB will also explore the

additional venues for the tournament.

The cricket board had also proposed to hold the four playoffs in neutral venues.

It was also emphasised to bring about changes in the playing conditions of the tournament to engage as many fans as possible in the tournament.

"This time around, the PSL coverage has received a boost in terms of media rights and live streaming. The PSL has been presented as the most successful brand in the world," the PCB said.

## Wapda, Asia Ghee Mills, WSTC, SA victorious in Challenge Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wapda, Asia Ghee Mills, WSTC and SA Gardens earned victories in the National Challenge Cup (NCC) 2023 final round here at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Saturday.

In the first match, Wapda secured a 3-0 victory over Pakistan Police. Alamghir netted two goals, while Shayek Dost contributed with one.

In the second match, Asia Ghee Mills emerged triumphant against Pak Railways with a narrow 1-0 win, courtesy of Muhammad Suleman Ali's lone goal.



HYDERABAD: Workers of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek hold mock coffins of 57 Islamic Countries and United Nation, during a protest rally and demonstration in front of McDonald's, Restaurant demanding Boycott the Israeli products and close the Mc Donald's and KFC, while police provide the security.



## Wheat imports scandal implicates present government as well

ISLAMABAD (Online): Wheat import scandal has implicated new government as PM Shehbaz Sharif was kept ignorant about the facts and the wheat import continued in the time of present government in the light of care taker government decision while over 16 lac tonnes wheat was available in Pakistan in 2023.

It has come to light that over 6 lac tonnes wheat has been imported by Shehbaz led present government despite availability of surplus stock of wheat in the country.

On the arrival of Shehbaz government in corridor of powers carry forward stock of 113529 tonnes wheat was available. Despite this fact over 6 lac tonnes wheat was imported during the time of new government.

Government sources told Online that former secretary Capt (Retd) Asif Mehmood kept PM ignorant of the facts. The import of additional wheat continued during the present government under the decision of care taker government.

As per documents finance ministry allowed to

import 5 lac metric tonnes wheat through private sector on September 27, 2023. When wheat was imported the value of dollar stood at Rs 305. The imported wheat cost Rs 92.820 per kilogram to Pakistan.

All the phases of the decisions made for importing wheat by care taker government are mentioned in the documents.

Former secretary food security Muhammad Mehmood sent summary for importing wheat to care taker PM Anwar ul Haq Kakar to ensure strategic reserves of wheat.

Former PM Anwar Ul Haq Kakar accorded formal approval to import 5 lac metric tonnes wheat on September 4, 2023. At that time in charge minister was minister of national food security too. The option for review of summary was also kept in the permission order as and when need arises.

It was told in the documents 75 percent target of procuring wheat from provinces was achieved in last year from the provinces. Mention of wheat and flour in big cities on October 5, 2023 is made in documents.

The documents include the price of imported wheat, its rates in international market and details of its expenses in Pakistan.

The summaries of commerce ministry and ministry of national food security have been made the part of record.

The target of wheat production in all the four provinces was set 28.18 million metric tonnes wheat during 2023.

It was proved in the documents that 1630000 metric tonnes wheat was available in Pakistan in 2022 as carry forward.

According to documents during the year 2023-24, wheat quota of 175000 metric tonnes was allocated for Pakistan army, 10500 metric tonnes for Pakistan Air Force and 2500 metric tonnes for Pakistan Navy. 1400000 metric tonnes quota was allocated for KP, 2 lac for Gilgit-Balstistan and 3 lac for AJK. 4 lac tonnes was given to utility stores and 244810 metric tonnes quota was provided to others. Overall 2732810 metric tonnes quota was allocated for the institutions and provincial governments.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Huawei Pakistan led by Ethan Sun CEO Huawei Pakistan celled on Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal.

## International Firefighters Day honours brave heroes worldwide, calls attention to challenges faced

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the occasion of International Firefighters Day, nations around the globe, including Pakistan, unite to pay tribute to the valour and sacrifices of firefighters who courageously risk their lives to safeguard communities during emergencies.

Established in 1999 following a tragic incident in Australia where five firefighters perished battling a sudden wildfire, this day serves as a solemn reminder of the inherent dangers faced by firefighters in the line of duty.

Renowned for their unparalleled dedication, firefighters are revered worldwide for their unique and perilous profession. Their role extends be-

yond mere firefighting; they undertake intricate rescue missions, often in unpredictable and hazardous conditions, requiring specialised skills and equipment.

In Punjab, the inception of the Rescue 1122 Service in 2004 marked a significant step towards bolstering emergency response capabilities.

However, the journey towards establishing a robust fire service was not without challenges, eventually leading to the establishment of the Fire Rescue Service in 2007.

Despite their selfless service, firefighters in Karachi have faced dire circumstances, with at least 33 lives lost and numerous others disabled while pro-

tecting lives and property. The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), grappling with financial constraints, has struggled to provide essential resources and facilities to its fire brigade.

In recognition of their unwavering commitment, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab has pledged to honour firefighters with the Pride of Performance award, acknowledging their invaluable contributions to the safety and well-being of the city's residents.

As the world commemorates International Firefighters Day, it also sheds light on the pressing need to address the challenges faced by these unsung heroes.

## Randhawa commends ICT Police's efforts in maintaining law, order

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa Saturday commended the dedication and professionalism exhibited by the ICT Police in upholding law and order in the federal capital.

He said this during a meeting with Inspector General (IG) of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, Ali Nasir Rizvi, said a press release.

During the meeting, IG Police provided a comprehensive briefing to the Chief Commissioner regarding the current law and order in Islamabad.

He highlighted key areas of focus and ongoing efforts by the police force to maintain peace and security

in the region. Ali Nasir reiterated the administration's unwavering commitment to supporting the endeavors of the police force.

Emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts, Chief Commissioner stressed the need for close coordination between the administration and law enforcement agencies to effectively address emerging challenges and ensure the safety and security of the citizens.

The meeting underscored the administration's proactive approach towards enhancing public safety and reaffirmed its support for the ICT Police in their mission to uphold law and order in the federal capital.

## Psychological test of Islamabad Police officers conducted

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police conducted a psychological test of officials deployed at Election Commission of Pakistan to improve

the test. The conclusion of the workshop saw recommendations formulated for resolving ongoing issues faced by officers.

Islamabad Police officials are always engaged in law and order duties in order to ensure the safety of the lives and property of



the performance and mental capability.

This initiative seeks to enhance the aptitude of officials within the Islamabad Police. The test included a special psychological examination committee, chaired by SSP Security Division, while SP CTD, SP Headquarters, and psychological experts were the members of the committee.

Police Officers from the Election Commission of Pakistan actively partici-

ated in the test. Maintaining the law and order situation in the federal capital, Islamabad is a big challenge, due to which the officials were facing not only physical but also mental difficulties.

In this regard, psychological tests of different division police officials were conducted. The purpose is to further improve the performance and solve the problems faced by the officials on a priority basis.

## Trial of civilians in military courts: SC issues written order regarding its April 24 hearing

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has issued written order regarding its April 24 hearing in connection with case pertaining to trial of civilians in military courts.

It was said in the order that at the inception of hearing Attorney General (AG) filed list of 20 persons who were released.

All the lawyers requested the court to seek decisions from the AG in connection with release of 20 persons. AG should file in SC the decisions made in the cases of 20 persons.

Khawaja Ahmad Hussain counsel for the petitioner raised objection on bench and referred to order of previous hearing of the case.

and Aitzaz Ahsan too gave arguments in connection with constitution of larger bench.

The learned lawyers were asked if they wanted decision on larger bench.

The lawyers took the plea for putting submissions before committee.

It was further said in the order considering the plea of the lawyers of respondents proper we consider it appropriate to put the matter before committee.

The committee will decide about the lawyers pleas on the matter of larger bench. Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi while declaring the matter freedom of citizens gave observation for fixing the matter for hearing again soon.

Suleman Akram Raja



ISLAMABAD: CDA planting date trees on the green belt alongside a road in Sector 1-8 in the Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Eng Azhar ul Islam, President Sardar Tahir Mahmood and General Secretary Ismail Khan of the Traders Welfare Association, F-8 Markaz, General Secretary IEAA Zahid Rafiq and others addressing a ceremony at chamber house.

## Mirwaiz vows continued pursuit of peaceful resolution for Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to seeking a peaceful resolution to the enduring Kashmir conflict.

In a recent media interview, he reiterated the significance of honoring the aspirations of the Kashmiri populace, underscoring the

Hurriyat's steadfast dedication to dialogue and cooperation as the means to achieve a resolution, KMS reported. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq pointedly criticized India's contentious actions on August 5, 2019, highlighting their detrimental impact on an already complex situation. He lamented that such measures have further marginalized and

disempowered the people of IIOJK exacerbating the challenges surrounding the longstanding dispute. The reiterated commitment by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and the Hurriyat Conference to pursue peaceful avenues for resolving the Kashmir issue underscores the ongoing efforts to address one of the most contentious geopolitical conflicts in the region.

## Randhawa directs to clean all nullah's of I'abad before monsoon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Commissioner Islamabad Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Randhawa Saturday directed that the cleaning work of all the nullah's of the federal capital should be completed before the monsoon season.

"While starting a cleanliness drive in the federal capital, he said all the obstructions in the nullah's should be removed for smooth flow of water."

Under the direction of Chief Commissioner, the authority has completed the cleaning work of Faisal Avenue's nullah including Sector F-7 and F-6, said a news release.

While the cleaning drive, the maintenance work of the remaining nullah's will also be completed soon. Despite the weekly holiday, the relevant staff remained present in the field.

Moreover, on the instructions of Chief Commissioner, the cleaning of the mega parks of Islamabad has also been started. The joint sanitation operation of the Directorates of Environment and Sanitation is going on across the city. In this regard, duties have also been distributed among the relevant staff to ensure their presence in the field.

## IRSA releases 131,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 131,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 192,300 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1464.50 feet and was 50.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 35,500 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1163.80 feet, which was 113.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

## Islamabad Police conducts mock exercise at National Assembly

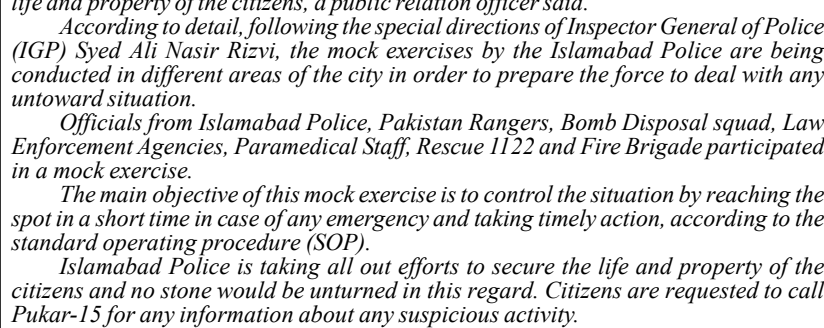
ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police conducted a mock exercise at the Nation Assembly with a purpose to deal with any possible emergency situation and to ensure the safety of life and property of the citizens, a public relation officer said.

According to detail, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the mock exercises by the Islamabad Police are being conducted in different areas of the city in order to prepare the force to deal with any untoward situation.

Officials from Islamabad Police, Pakistan Rangers, Bomb Disposal squad, Law Enforcement Agencies, Paramedical Staff, Rescue 1122 and Fire Brigade participated in a mock exercise.

The main objective of this mock exercise is to control the situation by reaching the spot in a short time in case of any emergency and taking timely action, according to the standard operating procedure (SOP).

Islamabad Police is taking all out efforts to secure the life and property of the citizens and no stone would be returned in this regard. Citizens are requested to call Pukar-15 for any information about any suspicious activity.



ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police conducting a mock exercise at the National Assembly to deal with any possible emergency situation.

## LG&CD deptt appoints Dr Abdullah as Focal Person Media

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Local Government & Community Development (LG&CD) Department Punjab has appointed Dr Abdullah Tabassum as Digital Monitoring Officer and Focal Person Media.

The announcement came in a recent notification, highlighting Dr. Abdullah's extensive experience in media-related roles.

According to a notification, the appointment was made in view of service background as he served as Focal Person Media Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad. While he also served as the Focal Person of Media & Event Management in the Tourism Department. Similarly, now he is serving as a Spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory Administration.

With his varied experience in government communications, Dr. Abdullah is set to oversee media relations for the LG&CD Department, ensuring smooth communication and public engagement.

The appointment signals the department's intent to strengthen its digital and media outreach efforts.

## Malik condoles sad demise of Shiekh Tahnoon Mohammad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, former SAPM on Human Rights and Women Empowerment, expressed her heartfelt condolences to the President, the entire Al Nahyan family, and the honourable people of the UAE on the sad demise of Shiekh Tahnoon Bin Mohammad Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Ruler's Representative in Al Ain Region.

Mushaal, a wife of unlawfully incarcerated Hurriyat leader Muhammad Yasin Malik, in her condolence message said that the entire people of Kashmir were grieved over the passing away.

## APHC pays tributes to Ashraf Sehrai on his martyrdom anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has paid glowing tributes to senior Hurriyat leader, Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai, on the eve of his third martyrdom anniversary in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, senior APHC leader and Tehreek-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir Chairman, Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai who challenged India's illegal occupation and political injustice in IIOJK for decades died in Indian captivity on May 05, 2021.

The APHC leaders including Ghulam Muhammad Khan Sopori, Adv Arshad Iqbal, Muhammad Saleem Zargar, Khawaja Firdous, Syed Bashir Andrabi, Maulana

United Nations to take solid steps for peaceful settlement of the lingering dispute.

The posters also urged people to unite for resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

The Indian Hindutva BJP government and its puppet regime in IIOJK are directly responsible for Ashraf Sehrai's custodial death, which once again proved that the BJP government is hell-bent on targeting the freedom loving Kashmiri leadership, the posters said.

The posters have also been circulated on social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp.

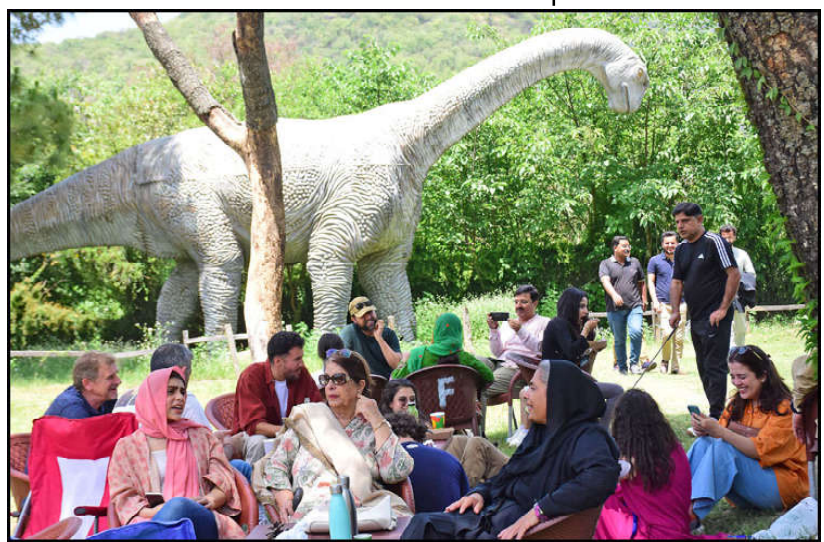
It is worth mentioning that Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai was booked under draconian Public Safety

Act, on July 12, 2020 after his arrest from Srinagar and shifted to Udhampur Jail in Jammu.

He was slow poisoned in the jail. He was also suffering from multiple diseases and was not provided with any treatment during his incarceration. His condition deteriorated in jail and was not given timely access to doctor.

He was only shifted to a hospital in Jammu on May 04 where he died next day. His family members were kept unaware of his health condition.

Ashraf Sehrai's son, Junaid Sehrai, who also rejected Indian hegemony and its illegal occupation of the motherland, was also martyred by the Indian troops during cordon and search operation in May, 2020.



ISLAMABAD: People enjoying the holiday at Dino Park in the Federal Capital.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**  
 Sunday May 05, 2024

## Meddlesome ways

After this week's proceedings in the so-called 'meddling case', it appears that the majority of judges comprising the superior judiciary have endorsed the six Islamabad High Court judges' complaint that they are not free to issue their judgements purely in line with legal principles and face routine pressure from intelligence operatives on how they must decide the cases before them. While it has been a long-held belief among the public that legal outcomes, particularly in political cases, often have little to do with the merits of the case and more to do with where the defendant stands in their relationship with the establishment, it is nonetheless startling that this belief is now being validated by senior judges themselves. It appears that the institution has had enough and wants change. There has been great turmoil within it for the past year or so, but unlike the other branches of state, this turmoil seems to be moving rapidly towards a denouement. All eyes have been on the Supreme Court to see what course it sets for the future. It is hoped that the judges hearing the case realise the weight of this responsibility and proceed accordingly.

The Pakistani judiciary does not rank very high in the public's perception of fairness, and nothing hurts its image more than the judges themselves complaining that officers who are subordinate to the state frequently try to threaten or blackmail them into issuing tailored judgements without any fear of consequences. The meddling case has also thrown into sharp relief the stark imbalances that still persist within the state more than a decade and a half after the lawyers' movement. From the disclosures made by the six IHC judges and endorsed by other high courts, it is clear that the judiciary has been unable to exercise the independence envisioned by those who agitated for it in the Musharraf era. Now that the need has been highlighted, it is imperative for the institution to take steps to protect itself from those who seek to subdue it. The legislature, too, must support the judiciary in its efforts in whatever way necessary. The survival and stability of any nation-state depend on a carefully calibrated balance of power between its different branches. Without this balance, there is chaos — something we are, tragically, witnessing with each passing day.

Zafar Mirza

Maps are important for destinations. But travelling on the road to universal health coverage, we first need to understand the destination itself.

The WHO's definition of UHC is: "when all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship."

Let's take Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as an example. How can we reach the destination where all the people of KP can use the quality health services they need without suffering financial hardship?

First things first. Do we clearly understand from which point we are embarking on this journey? In a nutshell, KP has a population of 40.85 million living in 5.88m households spread over 35 districts. Eighty-five per cent of the people live in the rural areas and the province has a population growth rate of 2.38pc,

which means that every year around a million people are added to the population and poverty is again on the rise.

All of these people need healthcare, ie, protection from risks to health and diseases (preventive health services); health education to avoid risky behaviour (promotive health services); treatment for those already sick (curative services); assistance for those suffering or recovering from disabling conditions including inborn defects, injuries and diseases (rehabilitative services); and care for the terminally ill (palliative services).

The UHC Service Coverage Index for 2022 in KP was 51.1 (the range runs from one to 100). The UHC SCI is calculated on the basis of only 14 basic health services and aspects of access and system capacity covering four key health domains: reproductive, maternal and child health, infectious diseases, NCDs, and health service access and capacity. The WHO and World Bank are jointly conducting UHC tracking biannually across the world since 2015. Pakistan has also been under-

taking the exercise for the last few years.

The state of access to a mere 14 essential health services indicate the overall state of health service coverage in society. In the case of KP, UHC SCI was 36.2 in 2015 and it went up to 51.1 in 2022, ie, 41.21pc increase in seven years. The global target is 80 by 2030.

According to National Health Accounts, out of a total health expenditure of Rs200.5 billion in the province in 2019-20, around 65pc was being spent by people out of their own pockets. Government spending was only 30pc. This is despite the fact that there is government-financed universal health insurance (UHI) available for hospitalisation, ie, secondary and tertiary healthcare.

Of the 30pc the government spends on health, around 70pc goes to secondary and tertiary healthcare and only around 30pc to primary healthcare. This lopsided spending is responsible for weak PHC, especially in the rural areas, for the majority of the population through public-sector health facilities. Because of this, people have to go to the cities and make

out-of-pocket payments as private healthcare is concentrated in the cities.

In this situation, what actions must the KP government take to advance UHC?

First and foremost, UHC, and not just the financial protection of hospitalised patients through the Sehat Card, should be established as a destination and this has to be done at a political level. (For an explanation of UHC versus UHI, see my last article on these pages.)

Once the destination is decided then the above-mentioned situation and the existing knowledge about which health service makes the greatest difference at what level of healthcare, and which sections of society need prioritised financial protection will dictate the priorities for the travel towards UHC.

The WHO says that up to 90pc of healthcare can be provided at the PHC level. We know that the most cost-effective healthcare, ie, preventive healthcare, which all people need, is also provided at the PHC level and when we know that 85pc of KP's population lives in the rural

areas we don't need to be Aristotle to work out where the focus of healthcare should be.

In this connection, to the credit of the KP government, a very well-worked-out essential package of health services with localised evidence was developed in 2021, which contains 98 services to be delivered at the district level. The package was also costed. At the current exchange rate, it requires around \$18 (Rs5,000) per capita per year. Currently, the KP government is spending only around \$5 per capita, so there is a glaring gap of \$13. The UHC SCI and the current state of PHC services for 85pc of the population reflects this gap.

Filling this gap, removing huge inefficiencies and delivering an essential package of health services to KP's rural areas is the key to meaningfully advance UHC. In urban areas, tertiary and secondary care for hospitalised patients is already universalised through the state-financed Sehat Sahulat programme by empanelling hundreds of private and public hospitals.

Without debating the

universalisation part, this has provided protection to poor families in KP against catastrophic and impoverishing expenditures. However, to further lower out-of-pocket expenditures by poor people seeking healthcare in the private sector, the Sehat Sahulat programme needs to be extended to PHC.

The road to UHC is fed by many small passages that pass through various areas of the health system, other than health services and financing, and include, but are not limited to, the health workforce, medicines and technologies, digital management of health information, etc. All such projects and efforts to strengthen various aspects need to be explicitly aligned with the goal of achieving UHC. So, the road to UHC in KP is being paved. Some important steps have already been taken. Huge financing gaps need to be filled, which seems like a Herculean job but is not impossible. Public-private partnerships in rural KP, especially with an expanding not-for-profit health sector in Pakistan would be the key. More on PPPs in the health sector another time. — Courtesy Dawn

## A divisive frame of mind

Dr Ayesha Razzaque

Would you rather have someone pick your pocket with their left or their right hand? Would you prefer to get robbed facing the business end of a small handgun or a rifle? Essentially, that is what the Power Division is deciding for customers of electric supply companies who have had enough and are transitioning, at least in part, to solar power.

Last week, several news outlets carried reports about a summary by the Central Power Purchasing Authority (CPPA) recommending to the government to impose a tax of Rs2,000 per kVA of solar power generation capacity on customers.

Capacities of typical residential solar plants range between 10 and 20 kVA — enough to zero out electricity bills in the winter months and substantially reduce them in the summer. At the reported rate, this would have translated into a tax of Rs200,000 to Rs400,000 per household per year. About 24 hours later, the Power Division came out with a statement strongly denying the existence of such a summary and

that no such tax was under consideration.

However, the statement went on to state that instead the Power Division was considering cutting the rate at which it buys power from net metered customers by about half — from Rs21 down to Rs11 per unit. Keep in mind that Islamabad's electric supply company IESCO charges customers from as little as Rs16 (for 0-100 units) to as much as Rs42 (for 700 units or more) according to tariff rates published on their website. So, they will not collect a solar power generation tax with their left hand but are considering picking your pocket with their right hand by suppressing the per-unit buyback rate, and in a high-inflation environment to boot!

The reason given for considering this step is that the drop in grid power demand from customers generating part of the power they consume from solar is making things worse for customers who do not have the same option (and is being discouraged). I am not aware of any other country in the world in which consumers who opt to shoulder the entire cost of

transitioning to green, clean, renewable solar power without subsidy from the government and who reduce the need for importing expensive, dollar-denominated fossil fuels are scapegoated (blamed for reducing demand for grid power), vilified (blamed for rising electricity tariffs), and exploited (underpaid for electricity produced).

Regardless of the detailed economics of the power sector, what stood out in the Power Division's clarifying statement is how it views solar power-generating consumers. Public utilities have failed to provide stable, reliable, and affordable power for years, in large part due to government ineptness. Now that consumers have had enough and those with the means are exiting the market, years, nay decades, of mismanagement are conveniently being laid at the feet of those consumers. This being Pakistan, to cover for their failures, solar power producers/consumers are being pitted against other consumers by framing it as a conflict between the 'wealthy' (solar power users) against the 'poor' (everyone else) because popu-

list divisiveness sells.

This is not the only time this playbook has been employed in recent times. From the start, the debate around the Single National Curriculum vs Cambridge school system was framed as a crusade against the rich in the name of the poor in which the first shot was vilification of private schools. Then, public scrutiny of the government's claims exposed the curriculum as the same low-quality as public school curricula of years past. The ridicule that accompanied it finally compelled the government to scale back its sweeping plans of forcibly replacing better curriculums with a single, subpar curriculum and school system across the country.

The government is also begrudging fed-up consumers adopting solar power the duration over which they recoup their cost. According to one official, solar power users make back the cost of their investment in about 18 months, which they have deemed too good an investment, and now wish to underpay solar power users so this payback period is drawn out to 10 years. Once again, instead of fix-

ing the inefficiencies in its delivery, officialdom's first impulse is to punish anyone who made a smart investment. In the land of the Pure, taking a calculated risk and making an investment that works out as planned is the ultimate sin.

How could it be any other way? Large sections of the decision-making elite in the bureaucracy — civil, uniformed, and robed — are leading existences that are increasingly insulated from the rest of the country and the consequences of their decisions. Too many receive generous allowances of free units on their electricity bill, insulating them from the power sector. To such an official, a consumer switching to solar is not someone to be applauded for reducing their carbon footprint but a cow to be milked.

Data about how many units of electricity are handed out as perks to power sector employees and influential persons is understandably hard to come by. The last reliable public data point I could find on this question was in the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's (Nepra) 'State of the Industry Report 2022'. In FY2021-22, it re-

ports Rs6.4 billion spending on the provision of free electricity units to serving and retired employees of DISCOs, GENCOs, NTDC, and WAPDA.

It is unclear whether this figure is computed using the unit cost or the tariff rate charged to ordinary consumers. This data point appears to have been omitted from the following year's (2023) report. Since then, tariffs have approximately doubled. We can safely estimate that the cost of providing this benefit to the same group of employees has doubled as well — to Rs13 billion. For context, that is roughly comparable to this year's federal budget for school education in ICT (Rs16 billion) or roughly a quarter of the federal government's spending on higher education nationwide (Rs66 billion). Think of the opportunity cost to education that these giveaways represent. This does not include the free power perk so many high officials and VIPs enjoy outside the power sector. Ordinary consumers are footing the bill for all these benefits and for every place else electric supply companies cannot be bothered to collect bills from. — Courtesy TheNews

## No lessons learnt

Basil Nabi Malik

If dictionaries ever gave specific examples to illustrate the meaning of a word, Pakistan's ruling elite would undoubtedly fall under the term 'incorrigible'. The latter word has been defined as something that is impossible to change or which is incapable of reform, i.e., something or someone who is unwilling to learn from his or her past mistakes. And if there is any class in any country which prides itself on refusing to learn, failing to reform, and being indifferent to the rule of law, it is Pakistan's all-knowing, or rather, not-knowing, ruling elite.

When Justice Qazi Faez Isa, as he was then, was being mercilessly targeted by the then ruling elite for his judgments, which among others included those criticising the military's suspected role in the Faizabad dharna, the PTI opened up a scathing front against him. They filed a reference against the future chief justice of Pakistan in an attempt to have him removed. Some say they did so out of their own volition, whereas others claim they were acting at the behest of a greater power.

Whatever the case might have been, many swiftly came to Justice Isa's defence in the name of an independent judiciary. Despite this, a full-blown media campaign was orchestrated to demonise him and his family. When the dust finally settled on the ordeal he and his family suffered, and justice (no pun intended) ultimately prevailed in the quashing of the reference against him, one had hoped that those in power would finally see reason, especially in light of the embarrassing manner in which they had to retreat. But clearly, we were wrong.

If the letter signed by six sitting judges of the Islamabad High Court is evidence of something, it is

that the executive, or those that come under it, have learnt absolutely nothing. It seems that they consider the independence of the judiciary a nuisance to be regulated and suppressed rather than a pivotal check and balance against the arbitrary misuse of executive authority. They see a competent and independent judge as a threat, and an unscrupulous and unprincipled politician or bureaucrat as an ally. They see an honest judge as dangerous, and an allegedly compromised one as amenable to being 'managed'. They see judicial independence as limiting, and a dependent judiciary as limitless.

This is what the judiciary is up against, and this is why the word 'incorrigible' makes perfect sense. But although we are painfully aware that these elites are not willing to learn, we must also ask if the judiciary itself has learnt lessons from its past experiences, and in doing so, whether or not it has prepared a robust response to attempts to interfere in its independence.

Thus far, its response to alleged interference has hardly been substantial. In fact, for an institution which claims to jealously guard its independence, the urgency in its response appears to have been missing. Perhaps this would be understandable had it been the first time that something of this nature was happening. Perhaps it would be understandable if no judge and his/her credentials had been targeted in such a manner prior to this incident. Or perhaps it would be understandable if this had happened during the tenure of a chief justice who had not himself experienced executive high-handedness.

But in these times, accepting a 'perpals' is as unfaithful as is the refusal of the ruling elite to learn from history. The judiciary must act — without delay. Difficult and

pointed questions will have to be asked, no matter how problematic.

For example, why is it that whenever a judge is seen as being critical that allegations of this nature start rearing their ugly head? Why is it that the credentials and background of a judge are considered satisfactory enough for his appointment but somehow become unsatisfactory when he or she exhibits an independent streak with regard to matters concerning the security apparatus? Why is it that whenever a judge's observations in a judgment are disagreed with, his family and personal life are likely to be targeted via a vicious vilification campaign? How is it that the Judicial Commission and Parliamentary Committee, with all the resources at their disposal, including perhaps reports and insight from various agencies, are unable to ascertain the most basic of alleged 'discrepancies' in the records of those aspiring to be judges, who are subject to a media trial? To put it another way, how did the records of judges, flawless and fully acceptable at the time of the appointment, become discrepancy-riddled later? These are important questions. This country is at a juncture where, unfortunately, even asking questions has become a courageous action.

However, dare I say, the judiciary's responsibility is much greater than to simply ask questions. It has to ask the right questions, and along with that, ensure that it receives the right answers as well. As such, it is time for the judiciary to offer a unified institutional response against attempts to influence, isolate, and break independent judges. The judges in question cannot and must not be left to fend for themselves, and the persons or authorities seeking to 'regulate' independent judges must not be allowed to do so. — Courtesy Dawn

Muhammad Khudadad Chattha

Several people glorify different forms of abusive behaviour by parents to discipline children, despite the existence of non-abusive alternatives that work well. When asked about the long-term consequences of such abuse, they are unaware at best or dismissive at worst. Dismissive answers can be as simple as 'we turned out fine' or, in a nostalgic reflection, they can bring up the virtues of 'old school' parenting.

This begs the question: if despite experiencing emotional or physical abuse in childhood, many of the adults around us turned out to be ostensibly functional, is there cause for concern? That is essentially the logic at the heart of 'we turned out fine'.

The short answer to the question is that childhood trauma in the form of physical and emotional abuse can never be taken lightly and has important long-term consequences. This is precisely what a huge body of literature in psychology shows, making it important to dispel the commonly held belief that childhood trauma does not leave a mark.

In a fascinating book *The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel van der Kolk discusses the long-term impact of different forms of trauma, including that experienced in childhood in detail. Let me give three simplified examples to explain some of the linkages between experiences in childhood and adult mental health.

First, children who grow up in households with emotionally unstable parents can develop anxiety disorders or hypervigilance. This is because they grew up

## Childhood trauma

in an environment where they had to constantly monitor the caregivers' emotional state. The hypervigilance helps them survive in the household as kids, precisely because the adult is emotionally unstable. But it becomes a serious mental health issue in adulthood potentially in the form of anxiety disorders. Anyone who has lived with an anxiety disorder would attest to the immense difficulty it adds to daily life.

Second, children who experience physical and/or sexual abuse, committed particularly by close family members, can end up with a host of issues related to intimacy in adulthood. This is because abuse at the hands of a trusted source confuses the child, making it very difficult for him/her to trust people in intimate settings in adult life. Again, this lack of trust starts off as a coping mechanism in childhood that helps keep the child safe. But it becomes a mental health challenge in adult life with serious trust issues and relationship difficulties.

Third, more broadly, childhood abuse experienced at the hands of primary caregivers or others can significantly increase the likelihood of developing serious mental health disorders, such as depression, attention deficit, eating disorders, etc. The mental health consequences of such trauma experienced at the hand of parents are potentially more severe, because the child expects the parent to keep them physically and emotionally safe.

These are just three examples of the countless ways in which childhood trauma, perpetrated especially by the child's caregivers, can lead to significant mental health

challenges in adult life. In many cases, you can come across a perfectly functioning adult who looks fine on paper, but who may struggle with many issues such as depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges beneath a calm surface. In other cases, these mental health challenges can become so significant that they impair daily functioning.

The one big challenge with mental health issues is that they often fly under the radar, making it easy to ignore them as a societal problem. You can't quite see it in the same way as you see other forms of physical diseases. There also happens to be shame and taboo around discussing mental health issues. A combination of these factors makes it difficult to acknowledge these issues and their link with childhood trauma. But the problem doesn't go away by ignoring it.

Of course, mental health challenges have many different contributors, including genetics and other environmental factors. The way we raise our kids also plays a huge role in changing the likelihood of children struggling with mental health disorders later in life. Physical and/or emotional abuse from parents significantly adds to this likelihood.

Hence, it is important to change cavalier and dismissive attitudes towards childhood abuse in parenting. Once we take this first step, we can open the door to more conscious modes of parenting.

While the 'old school' method of parenting might have many good features that we should retain in raising our future generations, a casual attitude towards physical and emotional abuse certainly shouldn't be one of them. — Courtesy Dawn



## Free medicines will be provided to 2 lac patients at their door steps: Maryam

**CM Punjab inaugurates 'Medicine Free Home Delivery' project**

LAHORE (Online): Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz has said free medicines will be provided to 2 lac patients at their door step.

"The project for providing free medicines was started by Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif. Medicines were provided to hepatitis, heart and TB patients at door step. But during the previous eras, this project was abolished instead of extending it. This way people were deprived of the facility of free medicines. Delivery at home became a dream. However we have launched it and have extended its scope to the entire Punjab, she said this addressing a ceremony here Saturday.

"I myself will go to certain homes to give medicines to them, she said adding two months

stock will be delivered at homes. The medical check up of the patients will be conducted again after two months. If the medicines are needed again then their stock will be distributed among the people, she remarked.

She remarked injustice is done to this nation when PML-N government is dissolved.

"We will launch about 200 clinics on wheels in coming days. We are launching first state of the art cancer hospital in Lahore. Its outdoor should be started within one year, she held.

"We have launched 32 field hospitals and these are mini hospitals, she underlined.

CM Maryam Nawaz also went to the residence of a cardiac patient Munawar Malik at

Shadman Kutchi Abadi and presented medicines to him. She talked to the patient and asked him about his health. Munawar Malik thanked CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif and said now he would not have to face problems of getting medicines in hospitals.

The CM also inaugurated Sahulat Markaz at the Primary & Secondary Healthcare Department. She formally restarted the registration process of TB and Hepatitis patients. She also inspected the Drug Testing Lab being established to check the quality of medicines. She visited chromatography, drug sample receiving area and hepatitis reference/public health lab. She was given briefing about the medicine home delivery programme.



**KARACHI:** Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a cabinet meeting, held at CM House in Karachi.

## CM launches Pakistan's 1st Automated Fare Collection System for People's Bus Service

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday launched Pakistan's first 'Automated Fare Collection System' for the Sindh People's Bus Service here at a local hotel.

Initially, the implementation of the Automated Fare Collection System has been launched on two pivotal routes namely Route-1 from Model Colony Malir to Tower and Route-9 from Gulshan-e-Hadeed to Tower. CM Syed Murad Ali Shah announced that the commencement of the system on the remaining

routes is scheduled to be accomplished progressively within 90 days.

While addressing the launching ceremony of the Automated Fare Card organised by the Sindh Minister for Transport Sharjeel Inam Memon, he vowed to provide a modern, efficient, safe, and smooth public transport system in the form of People's Bus Service to the people of the province.

The ceremony was also attended by Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin and others. The Chief Minister

Syed Murad Ali Shah said, "This Automated Fare Card has amazing features such as it is a contactless payment, reloadable balance, compatibility with various transit systems."

He said that the people of Karachi have acknowledged the services provided by PPP's Sindh government by giving more votes to PPP in the recent general elections.

He said that although the number of votes and seats gained by PPP in Karachi was less than his expectations, his leadership and he were content that the people of the beautiful city.

## KP ministers hold meeting on City Improvement Project Mardan

**Independent Report** PESHAWAR: A meeting chaired by Provincial Minister for Local Government, Elections, and Rural Development, Arshad Ayub, and Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, was held, here to discuss ongoing progress on "City Improvement Project Mardan."

The meeting was attended by members of the Provincial Assembly, including Shafi Jan, Mian Umar Kakakhel, and Mian Ifikhar.

Local government department secretary, special secretary, Director General, WSSP officials from Mardan district, and representatives from the Asian Development Bank, including Director Omer Ali.

During the meeting, the Secretary provided a detailed briefing on the progress of the "City Improvement Project Mardan" under the Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa City Improvement Project.

The secretary explained ongoing construction work in detail and future projects which would be included in the Mardan Master Plan.

Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub directed the relevant officials to ensure the timely completion of the Mardan City Improvement Project, emphasizing that no delays should be tolerated.

On this occasion, KP Minister for food Shah Toru highlighted the benefits of the project, stating that it will not only address waterlogging issues in Mardan but also meet modern demands. He further emphasized that the project will significantly reduce the risks of flooding and contribute to the beautification and cleanliness of urban areas, ultimately leading to positive health impacts for citizens.



**KARACHI:** Sindh Minister for Excise and Taxation, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon being briefed by officials about Automated Fare Collection Smart Card System during launching ceremony of Automated Fare Collection Smart Card System organized by Sindh Transport Department, held at local hotel.

## IGP Punjab visits Special Branch Headquarters

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar visited Special Branch Headquarters, here on Saturday. He reviewed the newly constructed Banyan Block.

Additional IG Special Branch Punjab Zulfiqar Hameed gave a briefing about the development works. The IGP Punjab appreciated the efforts of the Additional IG Special Branch for renovating and restoring the original look of the Banyan Block.

Expressing satisfaction, IGP Punjab praised the establishment of a special lounge for women and a dedicated section for daycare, demonstrating the department's commitment to inclusivity and employee welfare.

He commended the furnishing of the Banyan Block with modern amenities, including new furniture and state-of-the-

art washroom facilities. He also commended the restoration and embellishment of the ancient library, noting its significance as a masterpiece of architectural heritage.

He expressed appreciation for the inclusion of an e-library featuring historical books, emphasizing the importance of utilizing modern software for cataloging and preserving historical records.

Furthermore, Dr. Usman Anwar directed the implementation of robust modules to safeguard historical books and daily incident reports.

He also visited the Special Branch Mess, and had food with the officials to know the quality of the food.

He said that all possible measures should be continued for the welfare of the force.



**LAHORE:** Former Federal Minister Rana Nazir Ahmad and Shoaib Siddiqui addressing press conference at the Istehkam-e- Pakistan Party office.

## Commissioner directs to eliminate illegal bus stands from city areas

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi has presided a meeting at his office to review shifting of inter-city bus stands from inside to outside of the city and implementing ban on entering heavy traffic into the city during day time.

The meeting decided to eliminate illegal inter city bus stands established in city areas that is creating difficulties to the public with traffic jams.

The Commissioner directed to strictly enforce ban on entry of heavy vehicles in the city during day time. The meeting also reviewed proposed projects to take measures in removing illegal inter city bus stands from city areas and such stands be shifted to the identified areas at Super highway.

Secretary Transport briefed the meeting about the proposed bus terminals project of the Sindh government and informed about the efforts

of the government and presented suggestions.

The DIG Traffic said the heavy traffic is not allowed to enter the city from 6 am to 11 pm. He said that this ban will be implemented effectively.

He informed that people were facing problems due to illegal bus stands at Taj Complex, Qayoomabad, Karimabad, Cantt and various places.

The meeting also decided that Traffic Engineering Bureau (TEB) will be mobilized to improve the traffic system in the city while TEB and Traffic Police were directed to take joint measures to overcome the lack of traffic signals and lane marking.

The meeting was also informed that the traffic police proposed to the government to fund the traffic engineering bureau from its traffic fine revenue to meet the expenses of traffic signals, road lane marking and traffic signs.



**LAHORE:** Provincial Minister for Health & Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique in a group photo with best firefighters on the eve of World Firefighter Day.

## Provincial health minister visits DHQ Karak, inspect provision of facilities

**Independent Report** PESHAWAR: Provincial Health Minister, Syed Qasim Ali Shah on Saturday visited District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital Karak and inspected provision of facilities to patients.

He was accompanied by local elders and concerned officials of health department. He also checked data of health facilities being provided to patients under Sehat Card and directed to further improve service delivery system. Health minister said that government is working to digitize all the

record of health system for facilitation of people and said that performance of staff, availability of medicines and functioning of machineries could be monitored properly after the implementation of Health Information and Service Delivery.

Later, he attended health summit of Insaaf Doctors Forum and announced commitment of provincial government to improve health facilities in southern districts. He also urged doctors to support government in health reforms following vision of party leadership.

## Italian envoy calls on Sindh culture, tourism minister

KARACHI (APP): Italian Ambassador Marilina Armellini and Italian Consul General Danilo along with the delegation called on Sindh Minister for Culture, Tourism, Antiquities and Archives Sindh Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah and Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah here Saturday. They also visited the ancient Chowkundi graveyard.

Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah during the visit, briefed the Italian delegation about the ancient and historical status of Chowkundi Cemetery, a communique said.

He said that by securing the cultural heritage of Sindh, they are providing a favorable environment to the tourists due to which large number of foreign tourists are visiting the historical.



**GILGIT:** Police Khidmat Markaz staffer issuing online driving license to the customers in Ten District of GB.

## Pak Army organises free medical camp at Sheikhpura

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a commendable effort to serve the local community, the Pakistan Army organised a free medical camp catering to the residents of Chauhan and nearby villages near Sheikhpura. Led by dedicated doctors and paramedical staff, including gynaecologists, the camp provided essential medical examinations and treatments to hundreds of individuals, PTV reported. Approximately 800 patients availed themselves of the medical

services offered at the camp, including various diagnostic tests such as ECG. Beyond immediate medical care, attendees received invaluable insights through awareness lectures on hygiene, balanced diet, and disease prevention, notably focusing on combating ailments like dengue. The initiative received widespread appreciation from the local populace, who lauded the Pakistan Army's consistent efforts in organising such vital healthcare interventions.

## Italian ambassador calls on governor, visits Quaid's room

KARACHI (APP): The newly Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Marilina Armellini called on the Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori and visited Quaid's room.

The Italian ambassador was briefed about the things used by the father of the nation Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah, kept in the Quaid's room.

She showed her deep interest in the things used by the father of the nation. The Italian ambassador also inked her impressions in the guest book of Quaid's room. The governor apprised her about the importance of the Bell of Hope.

## CM lauds services of firefighters on Firefighters' Day

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said "Firefighters Day" is a day to recognize the sacrifices of firefighters who save people trapped in fires.

In her message on International Firefighters' Day, she added, "How can we forget the rescuers who sacrifice their lives to save others. I salute every brave firefighter on International Firefighters' Day. Those who jump into the burning fire for others without caring for their own lives are the real heroes." She maintained, "They brave every challenge in the line of duty. It is important to implement safety measures to prevent fire incidents. Implementation of building safety laws will be ensured to protect high-rise buildings from fires.

## PSCA expands free Wi-Fi service to 100 points

LAHORE (APP): Under the direction of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Punjab Safe Cities Authority has expanded its free Wi-Fi service from 50 to 100 points in Lahore.

This service is available for the convenience of citizens in emergencies. Citizens can contact the police and their loved ones through CM Maryam Nawaz's Free Wi-Fi in any emergency. They can also use the Women Safety App, the Punjab Police App, and WhatsApp.

## Field hospitals now operational across Punjab: Azma Bukhari

LAHORE (APP): Azma Bokhari, the provincial minister for Information & Culture, announced on Saturday that in line with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the field hospitals had been made operational now across Punjab.

As per the latest report, over 1,000 patients were attended to in a single day at these field hospitals. Among them, 85 patients benefited from testing facilities, provided by laboratories within these hospitals, while 72 patients underwent x-ray and ultrasound

examinations.

B u k h a r i emphasized that field hospitals were offering essential and continuous healthcare services to the residents of remote areas in Punjab. These facilities are fully operational in regions such as Bahawalpur, Jhang, Okara, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Faisalabad, and Sargodha.

She further stated that CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's top priority is ensuring a 'Healthy Punjab', as she is committed to constructive initiatives and their steadfast implementation.



**LAHORE:** Acting Punjab Governor, Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan offering Fateha on the sad demise of father of Member National Assembly, Saira Afzal Tarar during visit to her residence in village Kolu Tarar.

## American band promotes intercultural harmony thru music fusions

LAHORE (APP): An all-female US music band "Raining Jane" performed at the iconic cultural heritage site of the Lahore Fort the other night and presented before the rapt audience powerful music fusions transcending boundaries and promoting intercultural harmony.

During its two-day visit to the historic city of Lahore, the Raining Jane quartet met students and explored how art, particularly music, could be used as a vehicle for positive change in their communities. The concert aimed to promote empowerment of women and girls; encouraging young people to use art and music as a tool for social change; and promoting intercultural harmony through musical fusion.

US ambassador Donald Blome, US Consul General to Lahore Kristin Hawkins and DG Walled

City Kamran Lashari attended the musical extravaganza sponsored by the US Mission in Pakistan.

The US Mission in Pakistan invited the all-female band Raining Jane to tour Pakistan as part of its efforts to promote people-to-people exchange programs such as American Music Abroad (AMA) with the goal of promoting mutual understanding between the United States and Pakistan.

The charmed atmosphere of the Royal Kitchens at the Lahore Fort at night further enhanced enchanting impact of the musical compositions played by the all-female band. Speaking on the occasion, US envoy Donald Blome said that art and music have the power to transcend culture, language, and boundaries, adding that the American Music Abroad (AMA) program gives American.



**HYDERABAD:** Youngsters jumping and bathing in the swimming pole to get relief from hot weather in the city.

## IKD Hayatabad awarded ISO certification

PESHAWAR (APP): The Institute of Kidney Disease (IKD) Hayatabad has been awarded the prestigious ISO 9001-2015 certification for successful implementation of standard health related services.

Director IKD Mazhar Khan on Saturday said that they were delighted to announce that this achievement reflected their unwavering commitment to quality healthcare services and patient satisfaction.

The audit team, following a thorough evaluation, commended the remarkable efforts and dedication of the institute management and staff in achieving this significant milestone, he said and added that it was a testament to their team's hard work and relentless pursuit of excellence in healthcare delivery.

This certification underscores our commitment to upholding the highest standards of quality and continual improvement in all aspects of our operations.

## Two eunuchs shot on Kohat Road in City, in critical condition: Doctors

PESHAWAR (APP): Two eunuchs were shot on Kohat Road firing in the City and were in critical condition, doctors in the hospital on duty confirmed that both are in critical condition.

According to detail, some unknown gunmen shot the eunuchs returning from the program in Peshawar including Kamran alias Jaya and Muhammad Hamza alias Mehk were injured by bullets.

Kamran alias Jaya was shot in the waist while Hamza alias Mehk was shot in the foot, Police Control also confirmed the firing incident.

Both eunuchs are under treatment at LRH Hospital, the spokesman of the Hospital Muhammad Asim said.

## Ijaz visits RHC Garhi Khuda Bux Bhutto

LARKANA (APP): Chairman District Council Larkana Ijaz Ahmed Laghari along-with DHO Dr Shaukat Ali Abro, on Saturday visited Rural Health Center Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto.

He inaugurated the Polio campaign by administration OPV to protect children up to 05 years of age from polio.

Talking to the media on this occasion, he said the parents must give their children up to 5 years of age polio vaccines so that they can protect their children from this crippling disease and bring about the complete eradication of polio from this country and province.





LAHORE: Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain addressing meeting at the event of SMEDA.

## New industrial policy to be announced soon: Rana

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister of Industry and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain said on Saturday that the government would announce new industrial policy soon after the upcoming federal budget 2024-25.

He was addressing a consultative session on upcoming federal budget, jointly organised by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) here. Federal Secretary Ministry of Industries and Production Wasim Ajmal Chaudhry, FPCCI Regional Chairman Zaki Ijaz, the FPCCI executive members and a large number of businessmen attended the ceremony.

Rana Tanveer said that the government was committed to providing all possible facilities to industrialists, as the promotion of industrial

sector and increasing the exports is the first priority in its economic strategy. He said the SMEs of providing them an enabling environment.

He also appreciated the SEMDA Management for organizing the event and said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif is making all out efforts for reduction in the energy prices, besides reducing the circular debt of power sector.

The PM, he said, is also working tirelessly for reforms in various institutions. He said the country's economic problems would also be reduced with foreign investment.

Federal Minister said, "My focus is on skilled labour, and we have to move towards technology, a lot of work is being done on it, hopefully things will improve in the upcoming budget, we can overcome economic problems only by running the industry."

## Musadik underlines need to boost country's exports

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik said on Saturday Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had prepared a plan under which youngsters would get jobs after completing their degrees and they would be able to create employment opportunities for others as well.

Addressing a press conference here, he said: "To implement this plan, we need some changes in the system and support from other countries in the form of investment." Imbalance in the country's exports and imports was also creating challenges, he said and stressed the need for paying special attention to boosting exports of the country.

He said that the federal government wanted

to increase GDP [gross domestic product] and to boost productivity.

Musadik Malik said the government was bringing economic changes in the country and approaching other countries to ensure sustainable development. He said that there was a need to end an atmosphere of polarization in society and sense of respect and morality should be promoted.

The minister said that the government wanted to promote such a society in which Islamic and family values should be of prime importance, besides overcoming the problem of discrimination. "Pakistan has deep brotherly relations with Saudi Arabia," he said and added that Pakistan wanted its

development. He said the recent talks with Saudi Arabia were aimed at progress and development of Pakistan and arrival of their delegations was part of such efforts.

Musadik said that during the first visit of the Saudi Arabia high powered delegation to Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif briefed them that in which direction Pakistan wanted to work with Saudi Arabia. He said that Pakistan shared proposals with the Saudi Arabia through which they could make investment and share profits. He said that meetings were held with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy, Minister of Industry, Minister of Commerce, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Food Security.

## Equipping with essential skills vital for economic growth: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Saturday emphasized the importance of forging robust connections between academia and industry, besides equipping individuals with essential skills for achieving sustainable economic progress.

In a meeting with the Animal Husbandry Committee and vice chancellors of veterinary colleges, he said that the government was committed to resolve all the issues on priority basis faced by the local veterinary institutes,

said a press release.

Professor Ahsan Iqbal highlighted that a major challenge facing the animal husbandry sector is aligning education curricula with the demands of the modern era and bridging the gap between academia and industry to achieve requisite skills of economic development and social prosperity.

He emphasized the pivotal role of the veterinary sciences sector in national development goals, advocating for the adaptation of veterinary education curricula to meet the standards of the fourth industrial revolution.



RAWALPINDI: JI workers stage a protest demonstration to show solidarity with Farmers in the City.

## Gold rates dip by Rs.1,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,600 and was sold at Rs. 238,000 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs. 239,600 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,257 to Rs. 204,047 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.187,043, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs. 2,620 and Rs. 2,254.80 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$4 to \$2,301 from \$2,297, the Association.

## Pak-Uzbek business community welcomes KSA's \$20 billion investment in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT (APP): The business communities of Pakistan and Uzbekistan on Saturday welcomed Saudi Arabia's \$20 billion investment in Uzbekistan in energy sector.

Meanwhile talking to APP, besides the Tashkent International Investment Forum (TIIF), Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Uzbekistan, Vakhobov Davron Abdulolovich said that at the opening ceremony of the Tashkent International Investment Forum on May 2, the Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman announced the investment of \$20 billion by the Saudi government and the private sector in the energy sector, which will start projects in various energy sectors.

He said that the announcement of investment of \$20 billion by the Saudi government would also create opportunities for the business community of Pakistan due to which the business communities of both countries will work on many bilateral projects.

He said that after the execution of the projects not only Uzbekistan but also the economy of the region will benefit from this and regional countries can take advantage of this opportunity.

Talking to APP, Deputy Chairman of Kazakhstan Commodity Exchange, Nabikhon Samatov Samatov said that there is already an agreement between Pakistan and Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange for bilateral cooperation and now after the announcement of \$20 billion investment by Saudi Arabia, now there are big opportunities for Pakistani businessmen here.

He said that all the countries of the region will benefit from this huge investment in the energy sector. On this occasion, talking to APP, Habib Mamsan, member governing member of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange and head of the delegation of businessmen visiting Tashkent International Investment Forum, said that the business communities.

## Rs.812.4mln fine imposed on 7774 power pilferers

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) caught 7774 power pilferers during last 238 days and imposed a fine of over Rs.812.4 million for stealing electricity in six circles of the company during the ongoing special anti-power theft drive.

A spokesman said here on Saturday that over 18.1 million detection units were charged and 7659 cases were registered against power theft in various police stations whereas the police arrested 6227 pilferers so far in addition to recovery of Rs.578.6 million from power pilferers.

Giving further details, he said that FESCO teams detected electricity theft at 1843 points in Faisalabad First Circle and imposed a fine of Rs.195.3 million on them under the head of

4423,000 detection units. In Faisalabad Second Circle, the FESCO teams caught 1372 electricity thieves and imposed a fine of Rs.143.6 million under 3382,000 detection units.

Similarly, 882 cases of electricity theft were detected in Jhang circle and the company fined Rs.94 million under 2641,000 detection units.

He further said that 1135 electricity thieves were caught from Sargodha circle and they were imposed a fine of Rs.120.7 million under 2356,000 detection units.

In Mianwali circle, 1995 consumers were found involved in electricity theft and they were fined Rs.193 million for 4030,000 detection units. The FESCO teams also caught 547 power pilferers from Toba Tek Singh circle and they were fined Rs.65.5 million.

## Action against profiteering continues

SIALKOT (APP): Price magistrates conducted 5,390 inspections and a fine of Rs. 6,38,500 was imposed on profiteers while 3 cases were also registered in May.

These details were given in a meeting chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner General (ADCG) Syed Asad Raza Kazmi. District Officer (DO) Industries Rashida Batool gave a briefing. Assistant Commissioner (AC) Ghulam Sarwar and price magistrates from across the district participated in the meeting.

The meeting was told that the price control magistrates had detained 24 people guilty of violations and 7 shops and business centers were sealed.

ADCG Syed Asad Raza Kazmi directed that the process of inspections should be accelerated to ensure implementation of prices of food items and action should be taken against profiteers.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Power and Petroleum, Dr Musadiq Malik talks to media personnel at PTV office.

## BF leader calls retaining policy rate highest level 'unfair'

PESHAWAR (APP): Leader of Businessmen Forum (BF), former Senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour described retaining policy rate at 22 percent as unfair and detrimental for business, industrial and economic growth and demanded to bring it down to 12 percent.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, Ilyas Bilour, a leading businessman of the country recalled that the PML-N led government in its previous tenure had brought down the interest rate by a single digit.

The BF leader asked: "How will the business community gain loans from commercial banks at this highest interest rate?"

He added it is quite difficult for the business community to repay loans to the banks with an interest rate of 25 percent.

Businessmen are already in high trouble in the prevailing circumstances and getting loans from the commercial banks at markup of 25 percent is not only difficult but completely impossible for them, Mr Bilour said.

The BF leader said the government is borrowing from commercial banks through T-bill. He said if the central government asked the Governor, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to bring down the interest rate to 12 percent from current 22 percent, that will accelerate the process of business, trade and industrialization and stabilize the national economy as well. He maintained prices will go down by making a drastic cut in interest rate that will provide relief to the poor segment of the society.

## JI expresses solidarity with farmers

MULTAN (APP): Jamat-e-Islami Multan here on Saturday organized a protest camp to express solidarity with farmers at Seyedwala Bypass.

Amir Jamat-e-Islami Dr Safdar Hashmi, while addressing the farmers participants, stated that the farmers and other citizens hailing from various sectors were very much worried due to the ongoing circumstances. He criticized government's policy for not addressing concerns of wheat farmers. Wheat was not being purchased and it would worsen agriculture sector in coming days, he said. Dr Safdar Hashmi stressed upon government to conduct judicial inquiry on the issue of wheat import.



QUETTA: A labour sitting on vegetable stuff while going toward destination.



ISLAMABAD: H.E Muhammad Karamone, Moroccan Ambassador called on President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh at Capital Office. Chairman Capital Office Karim Aziz Malik, Coordinator Diplomatic Committee Ahmed Waheed, Chairman Coordination FPCCI Malik Sohail Hussain, Mian Akram Farid, Vice President ICCI Azhar Islam, Chaudhry Naseer, Tariq Jadoon, Special Advisor Afshan Malik, Amina Malik, Rashid Humayun and others are also present on the occasion.

## Wheat Import:

## Businessmen call for judicial commission for impartial enquiry

ISLAMABAD (INP): The businessmen have demanding establishing a judicial commission to investigate the wheat import scandal in an independent and impartial way, as the former caretaker government's decision to import wheat worth one billion dollars in Oct 2023 during a severe shortage of dollars and in spite of ample wheat stock in the country, was deeply concerning.

The business community also lashed out at the Punjab government for not purchasing wheat from farmers, warning it of severe consequence if the decision regarding the non-

procurement of grain was not revoked.

Former Vice President FPCCI and senior leader of the BMP Muhammad Ali Sheikh observed that the private sector leadership under the banner of Pakistan Businessmen Panel has always stood firm and united against harmful actions to national economy and the people of the country and has not accepted any move by mafias, who were responsible for creating chaos through unnecessary and unwarranted proposals, detrimental to national cause.

"We shall continue our efforts for the

protection of our community and the countrymen at large, who have been directly and indirectly involved in national economic growth" he stated and added that BMP has never safeguarded the vested interests of mafia, which not only halt the progress of the country but curb the large part of society.

He felt pity on the current leadership of FPCCI, which was trying to protect wheat mafias and providing shelter to most recent act of importing massive wheat just few months before the country's wheat crop is being harvested.

## Tourism is important sector in Morocco in which Pakistanis can invest: Karamone

Direct flights and strong air links should be established between Pakistan and Morocco: Atif Ikram Sheikh

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: President of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh met with Moroccan Ambassador Muhammad Karamone at the Federation House. On this occasion Atif Ikram Sheikh said that direct flights and strong air links should be established between Pakistan and Morocco.

Trade between Morocco is less than expected Joint ventures in new sectors will have to be created CPEC in Pakistan will be a major center of trade in the future Morocco should take full advantage of this.

Pakistan has a lot of scope in agriculture, tourism We will soon be taking a delegation to Morocco to hold B2B meetings with businessmen

there to explore ventures for investment.

Federation President Atif Ikram said that Pakistan is a country rich in natural resources, there are vast opportunities for investment in many sectors including tourism, construction, hydro, textile, pink salt, solar power projects, mines and minerals, gemstones, agriculture.



MULTAN: Farmers are busy wheat threshing at their field.

## Industry heading towards closure due to continuously rising energy cost: FRIA

LAHORE (INP): Senior Vice Chairman Ferozeur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) Shahbaz Aslam has said that due to continued increase in energy price, the industry is heading towards closure which will ultimately result in amplifying unemployment rate and diminishing Pakistan's export capabilities.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, he urged the government to explore and provide affordable energy alternatives for the industry and stressed that such measures were crucial for ensuring the competitiveness of Pakistani products in the global market.

As the industrial sector grapples with the ramifications of the gas price hike, the FRIA leader's stance advocates for the preservation of industrial stability and the prevention of potential economic setbacks for Pakistan.

Shahbaz Aslam said that the repeated increase in the gas and electricity prices to an unbearable

level by the government has left the trade and industry uncompetitive; blaming it for trapping the country in the IMF plans. Strongly opposing gas price surge, he said that the gas tariff hike has threatened the industrial sector, besides increasing unemployment, saying that the every government had poor economic policies that unleashed the free fall of rupee against the dollar, ensuing in input cost escalation to pull down the manufacturing growth.

The FRIA senior vice chairman demanded the government to take back the decision of hike in gas tariff in the larger interest of national economy and to save the industries from collapse. He warned that in case, the decision was not withdrawn, the industries will close down, resulting in decline in exports and mass unemployment.

In an appeal, he said that the business community was given assurance for 9 cents per KWh electricity tariff by the caretaker government. The assurance brought a sigh of relief.



## ICC rebukes individuals threatening 'retaliation' against its personnel

### Monitoring Desk

THE HAGUE: International Criminal Court prosecutors warned against "individuals who threaten to retaliate" against the tribunal or its staff, saying such actions might constitute an "offence against its administration of justice".

The ICC did not say if the comment related to its investigation into possible war crimes by Israel or Palestinian groups in Gaza and the West Bank.

Media in the United States said this week the ICC might issue an arrest warrant for Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and that the latter had urged President Joe Biden to prevent the court from doing

so. On Friday, the Hague-based office of ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan said on X that it sought to "engage constructively with all stakeholders whenever dialogue is consistent with its mandate".

"That independence and impartiality are undermined, however, when individuals threaten to retaliate against the court or against court personnel" if it "made decisions" about probes that fell in its mandate, it said.

"Such threats, even not acted upon, may constitute an offence" against the ICC's "administration of justice", it said.

"The Office insists that all attempts to impede, intimidate or improperly

influence its officials cease immediately." Karim Khan's office declined to answer questions as to where the threats of retaliation may have originated from. It also declined to comment when asked whether it was referring to its investigation into Israel and the Gaza crisis. The ICC opened a probe in 2021 into Israel, as well as Hamas and other Palestinian groups. Khan has said this investigation now "extends to the escalation of hostilities and violence since the (Hamas) attacks that took place on Oct 7". The New York Times has quoted Israeli officials as saying that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could be among those charged by the court.



Srettha Thavinsin, a local property tycoon and Pheu Thai Party's prime ministerial candidate and Paetongtarn Shinawatra, daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and Pheu Thai's prime ministerial candidate, speak to the media, after the polling stations closed, on the day of the general elections in Bangkok, Thailand.

## Israel's planned invasion of Rafah risks killing hundreds of thousands, UN says

### Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK: The United Nations humanitarian aid agency says hundreds of thousands of people would be "at imminent risk of death" if Israel carries out a military assault in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. The border city is a critical entry point for humanitarian aid and is filled with displaced Palestinians, many in densely packed tent camps.

An Israeli airstrike in Rafah overnight Friday killed seven people — mostly children. The Biden administration, which provides Israel crucial military and diplomatic support, says it opposes a Rafah invasion unless Israel provides a "credible" plan for protecting civilians there.

Turkey, an important Israeli trading partner, has suspended all imports and

exports to Israel. The country's trade minister says the move was in response to "the deterioration and aggravation of the situation in Rafah".

International mediators are trying to broker a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas, and a leaked truce proposal hints at compromises by both sides after months of stalemated negotiations.

The Israel-Hamas war has driven around 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million from their homes, caused vast destruction in several towns and cities, and pushed northern Gaza to the brink of famine. The death toll in Gaza has soared to more than 34,500 people, according to local health officials, and the territory's entire population has been driven into a humanitarian catastrophe.

## Japan's Kishida unveils a framework for global regulation of generative AI

### Monitoring Desk

PARIS: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida unveiled an international framework for regulation and use of generative AI on Thursday, adding to global efforts on governance for the rapidly advancing technology.

Kishida made the announcement in a speech at the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

"Generative AI has the potential to be a vital tool to further enrich the world," Kishida said. But "we must also confront the dark side of AI, such as the risk of disinformation."

When Japan chaired the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations last year, it launched a Hiroshima AI process to draw up international guiding

principles and a code of conduct for AI developers.

Some 49 countries and regions have signed up to the voluntary framework, called the Hiroshima AI Process Friends Group. Kishida said, without naming any.

They will work on implementing principles and code of conduct to address the risks of generative AI and "promote cooperation to ensure that people all over the world can benefit from the use of safe, secure, and trustworthy AI," he said.

The European Union, the United States, China and many other nations have been racing to draw up regulations and oversight for AI, while global bodies such as the United Nations have been grappling with how to supervise it.



Houthi military spokesman, Yahya Sarea, chants slogans as he delivers a statement during a pro-Palestinian rally in Sanaa, Yemen.

## Russian, US troops at same base in Niger

### Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has said Russian soldiers have been deployed to an airbase in Niger that also houses American troops, after the country's military rulers decided to expel US forces.

Niger's junta, which seized power last July, said in March it was ending a military cooperation agreement with Washington that has agreed to withdraw its troops and sent a delegation to Niamey to work out an orderly departure.

Prior to the 2023

coup, Niger was a linchpin of US strategy to combat militants in West Africa, housing a \$100 million American drone base and roughly 1,000 US troops.

The Russian deployment to Airbase 101 in the capital Niamey puts Russian and American soldiers in close quarters at a time when Washington and Moscow are fiercely at odds over the war in Ukraine.

Asked about it at a news conference on Thursday, Austin said the Russian deployment did not pose a "significant issue."

## Yemen's Houthis say they will target ships heading for Israel anywhere within range

### Monitoring Desk

DUBAI: Yemen's Houthis will target ships heading to Israeli ports in any area that is within their range, military spokesman Yahya Sarea said in a televised speech.

"We will target any ships heading to Israeli ports in the Mediterranean Sea in any area we are able to reach," he said. The Iran-aligned Houthi militants have launched repeated drone and missile strikes on ships in the crucial shipping channels of the Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandab strait and the Gulf of Aden since November.

## Hamas says studying Gaza truce proposal 'in positive spirit'

### Monitoring Desk

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh said on Thursday (May 2) that the Palestinian group was studying a proposal for a truce in the nearly seven-month war raging in Gaza with a "positive spirit".

In a call to Egypt's intelligence chief Abbas Kamel, Haniyeh said he "appreciated the role played by Egypt".

## Nine killed in strike on displacement camp in eastern Congo, officials say

### Monitoring Desk

GOMA: At least nine people, including seven children, were killed on Friday in a strike at a displacement camp in the eastern Congolese city of Goma, a local official and a military spokesman said. It was not immediately clear what kind of explosive device was used or who was responsible for the attack.

A two-year offensive by the Rwanda-backed rebel group M23 has moved closer to Goma in recent months, prompting thousands to seek refuge in the

city from surrounding areas. The head of the Lac Vert district where the incident occurred, Dedesi Mitima, told Reuters he had seen the bodies of seven children and two men at the camp.

Several other people were wounded and the death toll could rise further, Mitima added. Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume Njike Kaiko, a spokesman for the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) army in the region, said the strike had come in retaliation for earlier DRC attacks on Rwandan army positions.

## Pro-Palestinian students camp out at exico's largest university

### Monitoring Desk

MEXICO CITY: Dozens of pro-Palestinian students from Mexico's largest university camped out Thursday in solidarity with similar protests that have swept colleges in the United States.

Mounting flags and chanting "Long live free Palestine," the protesters set up tents in front of the National Autonomous University of Mexico's (UNAM) head office in Mexico City.

The students called on the Mexican government to break diplomatic and commercial ties with Israel.

"We are here to support Palestine, the people who are in Palestine, and the student camps in the United States," said Valentino Pino, a 19-year-old philosophy student.

Jimena Rosas, 21, said she hoped the protest would have a domino effect and spread to other universities in the country.

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Members of the Palestine Action Group gather ahead of a rally, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Sydney, Australia.

## Labour heaps heavy defeat on Tories in local polls

### Monitoring Desk

LONDON: Britain's opposition Labour Party won a parliamentary seat in northern England on Friday and control of several councils, inflicting heavy losses on the governing Conservatives to pile more pressure on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to hold an early general election.

The thumping victory set the tone for what will be a closely watched two days of local results before the national election this year, which polling shows could put Labour leader Keir Starmer in power and end 14 years of Conservative government.

While suffering what were expected losses, the Conservative Ben Hou-chen won re-election as the mayor of the northern region of Tees Valley, offering some comfort to Sunak.

He is also hoping the party's mayoral candidate in the West Midlands will hold onto power to help silence calls for him to step down.

Voters cast their ballots on Thursday for more than 2,000 seats on local authorities across England and a handful of high-profile mayoral elections, including in the capital, London.

## Skeletons missing hands and feet found in Hitler's Wolf's Lair

### Monitoring Desk

WARSAW: Five human skeletons - all missing their hands and feet - have been discovered at Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's eastern front military headquarters in present-day Poland, buried inside the villa of Luftwaffe commander Hermann Goering. The bodies of three adults, a baby and an older child were discovered by a group called the Latebra Foundation, amateur archaeologists who have been excavating at the site with official permission for several years, group members and officials said.

## UNESCO awards its world press freedom prize to all Palestinian journalists

### Monitoring Desk

PARIS: UNESCO on Thursday awarded its world press freedom prize to all Palestinian journalists covering the war in Gaza, where Israel has been battling Hamas for more than six months.

"In these times of darkness and hopelessness, we wish to share a strong message of solidarity and recognition to those Palestinian journalists who are covering this crisis in such dramatic circumstances."

## Judge says gag order won't prevent Trump from testifying in criminal case

### Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK: The judge overseeing Donald Trump's hush money criminal trial said on Friday that a gag order preventing him from commenting about witnesses and jurors does not bar him from testifying in court on his own behalf.

"I want to stress to Mr. Trump: you have an absolute right to testify at trial," Justice Juan Merchan said to start the 11th day in Trump's hush money trial.

Thursday's session that the gag order would prevent him from testifying. He said on Friday that was not actually the case. "It won't stop me from testifying," he told reporters before entering the courtroom.

Trump said his legal team would try to overturn the gag order, which bars him from making public comments about jurors, witnesses, and families of the judge and prosecutors if those statements are meant to interfere with the case.

## States opting for innovation to boost economy, UN report says

### Monitoring Desk

GENEVA: A revival of industrial policies is under way around the world, the United Nations said on Thursday, with countries going for technological innovation to diversify their economies.

The UN's World Intellectual Property Organisation said greater productivity levels could be reached through specialising in existing strengths. "In economies of all sizes, we are seeing a resurgence in industrial policymaking," said WIPO chief Daren Tang.

"This includes in many developing and least developed countries, who are increasingly targeting economic diversification — and the innovation, creativity and technology required to achieve it — as a means

of securing supply chains, addressing national and international challenges and driving sustainable growth.

"More and more economies see their future in innovation, creativity, technology and entrepreneurship," he added. The UN agency on Thursday released its World Intellectual Property Report, which is aimed at helping policymakers make better decisions by strengthening national innovation systems.

The report said the top economies for scientific, technological and production capabilities were all high-income countries, such as the United States, France, Germany, Japan and South Korea, and/or large economies such as China and India.

## Xi heads to Europe to defend Russia ties

### Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: Xi Jinping heads to Europe on Sunday to defend China's "no limits" alliance with Russia, first to key Ukraine backer France, then to Serbia and Hungary, which have close ties to the Kremlin.

The world's second-biggest economy is seeking to deepen political and economic ties in Europe to counterbalance difficult relations with rival Washington.

But analysts say that if France and other Ukraine allies in Europe believe that Xi can be coaxed into abandoning his friendship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, they will be disappointed.

Despite French President Emmanuel Macron's red carpet welcome for Xi when he arrives on Sunday, their talks will be far from straightforward.

In Paris on Monday, Xi and Macron will hold talks with European Com-

mission President Ursula von der Leyen, who has urged Beijing to play a greater role in ending the Ukraine war.

"If the European side expects China to impose sanctions on Russia, or to join the United States and Europe in imposing economic sanctions on Russia, I think it's clearly unlikely to happen," said Ding Chun, director of the Centre for European Studies at Shanghai's Fudan University.

Xi is seeking to push back on recent European Union probes into China's industry, but France has made clear that "first and foremost" on the agenda will be Russia's war in Ukraine.

China claims to be a neutral party in Ukraine but has never condemned Russia's invasion, while the United States has said Moscow would struggle to sustain its war without Beijing's support.

## Sudanese refugees flee UN camp in Ethiopia following attacks

### Monitoring Desk

NAIROBI: At least 1,000 Sudanese refugees have fled a camp run by the United Nations in northern Ethiopia following a series of shootings and robberies, three of the refugees and the United Nations said.

The refugees said about 7,000 of the 8,000 residents of the Kumer camp left on foot early on Wednesday morning after they were attacked and robbed by local militiamen.

They said they were detained by the police shortly after leaving the camp, which is 70 km (43 miles) from the Sudanese border in Ethiopia's Amhara region. They asked not to be named for fear of reprisals. The United Nations refugee agency UNHCR said it was aware that 1,000 people had left Kumer on Wednesday because they felt unsafe after a series of security incidents.

Spokespeople for the Ethiopian government, the Amhara regional administration, the federal police and the national refugee agency did not respond to requests for comment.

More than 1.6 million Sudanese people have fled their country since civil war broke out in April 2023 between the army and a rival paramilitary unit. About 33,000 have crossed into Ethiopia, according to UNHCR.

Sudanese refugees in Kumer told UNHCR in a recent letter that they have been facing rampant insecurity for months, including kidnappings for ransom, killings and armed robberies. Amhara militiamen have been battling federal forces for nearly a year across the region in a conflict that left more than 200 people dead last year, according to the United Nations. "We can no longer stay here," one of the refugees told Reuters by phone. "We have been abducted, killed, and attacked repeatedly since we arrived here in June."

Under a roof of plastic sheets in one of the camps in Kayah state, Augusta waits for the 10 gallons that must cover her family's drinking, cooking and washing needs for the next three days.

More than 123,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in Kayah by the conflict unleashed by the military's 2021 coup, according to the United Nations.

Now, a heatwave that has sent the mercury in Myanmar to 48 degrees Celsius (118 Fahrenheit) in some places has added to uncertainties of life in the camps. "Last year, we got water from a spring nearby," Augusta told AFP.

"But now we can't get water from that place as there is no water left there." We have to be fr-

gals... If we don't shower today, maybe tomorrow we can wash our hands and faces."

The scarcity means she and her children are often unable to wash properly or clean their clothes in the baking heat.

"The children are itching and they seem dirty, and we also don't have clean clothes for them," she said.

A dozen or so camp residents queue up at the truck for water rations that will have to last them three or four days. Children carry the containers home in baskets on their backs or via trolleys as hot wind whips up dust from the dirt road.

"When there were only residents living in this place, there was enough water," said Zay Yar Tun, of the charity Clean Yangon. "But after the displaced people fled here, the population is too much for the amount of water we can get here."

Donations keep Zay Yar Tun's team and its two trucks running, and they make two deliveries to the camp each week.



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak looks at a Shetland pony during a visit to a military base in North Yorkshire.



## Pakistan denounces India's cross-border assassination campaign

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has slammed the latest Indian campaign to target and kill citizens across the borders, urging the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council to address New Delhi's new strategy of conducting assassinations.

Taking part in a UN General Assembly debate on the "Culture of Peace", Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN Munir Akram told the audience that India was targeting Indian Muslims, Christians, as also Muslims of Occupied Kashmir, and called for an end to their harsh suppression.

He said "Since the BJP-RSS government assumed office in 2014, hate, oppression, and violence against India's 200 million Muslims – and other minorities, Christians and the 'lower-caste' Dalits – have become rampant and systematic, fueled by the ideology of Hindutva."

The Pakistani ambassador said "Unless Hindutva fascism is op-

posed, unless the sense of impunity of the BJP-RSS is ended, unless the Indian Muslims are protected against genocide, and unless the Kashmir dispute is peacefully resolved, wider violence and conflict in South Asia is a real and present danger."

Munir Akram in his speech that comprehensively dealt with how New Delhi's policies were posing a threat to peace in the region said the world is witnessing the rise of hate, violence and war, with over 300 conflicts are raging across the globe. "The right of peoples to self-determination is being brutally suppressed, especially in Palestine and in Jammu and Kashmir," Ambassador Akram said, adding, "We see the spread of discrimination, bigotry, xenophobia and Islamophobia even in mature democracies."

Highlighting Pakistan's efforts to combat Islamophobia, he said, "The world cannot but be deeply concerned at the of-

ficially sanctioned manifestations of Islamophobia in India."

India's Citizenship Law and National Registry list is designed to exclude Muslims from citizenship and to expel them, the Pakistani envoy said. Cow vigilantes, lynch, kill and assault Muslims with official approbation, he said, noting that Muslim men are persecuted for so-called "love jihad" to prevent them marrying Hindu women.

Extremist Hindu groups have expressly called for genocide against Muslims, he told the 193-member Assembly. The organization – Genocide Watch – has warned of the possibility of genocide of Muslims in India as well as in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. "And just last week," the ambassador said, "Prime Minister Modi himself fuelled the hate and violence against Muslims calling them 'infiltrators' who would be taking the wealth of Hindu men in India."

He made these remarks while talking to California's Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis during meeting in Los Angeles, California.

The Ambassador said Pakistan and the United States have a longstanding cooperation in agriculture sector. Universities from the two countries are intertwined.

Masood Khan said the two sides can also collaborate in IT and energy sectors.

He said Pakistan is already connected with the Silicon Valley and many



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif distributing Awards among the high performing officers of the Federal Board of Revenue.

## Pakistan seeks US expertise, technology in agriculture modernization: Masood

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan says Pakistan seeks United States' expertise and technology in agriculture modernization, hybrid seed development and climate smart crops and agriculture.

He made these remarks while talking to California's Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis during meeting in Los Angeles, California.

The Ambassador said Pakistan and the United States have a longstanding cooperation in agriculture sector. Universities from the two countries are intertwined.

Masood Khan said the two sides can also collaborate in IT and energy sectors.

He said Pakistan is already connected with the Silicon Valley and many

Pakistani-American and American firms were investing in Pakistan's tech sector. He observed that there was huge potential of broadening the scope of cooperation in new energies and renewable energy sector.

Masood Khan pointed out that Agriculture University Faisalabad has a multifaceted cooperation with its U.S. partner university.

Appreciating her role in establishment of Punjab-California Sister State relationship, Masood Khan said that there was a need to take cooperation under Sister-State relationship to the next level for tapping full potential of the arrangement.

On the occasion, the Lt. Governor said the United States has the best technological and labour

practices.

She offered her full support in cementing bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and California in agriculture sector.

Eleni Kounalakis also offered help in placement of Pakistani film content on Netflix in order to promote cultural and people-to-people ties between Pakistan and the United States.

Meanwhile, Renowned World Affairs Council of Orange County hosted luncheon in honour of Masood Khan where the Ambassador spoke to a large number of intellectuals, policy analysts and other area experts.

Masood Khan said that Pakistan did not want to choose between the United States and China. Instead, Pakistan could act as an economic bridge between the two countries.

## Jam holds meeting to tackle border area challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan chaired a meeting on Saturday to discuss innovative solutions and proactive measures to address the challenges faced by the country's border areas, aiming to foster socio-economic prosperity in these regions.

Formed under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's initiative, the high-level committee is tasked with devising comprehensive strategies for the holistic development of these areas, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce. The meeting covered various matters, including tariff rationalization and employment creation, reflecting the committee's commitment to addressing challenges faced by the border communities.

The committee aims to present its recommendations to the Prime Minister within 10 days, signalling a

promising start to collaborative efforts for socio-economic development in the region."

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER MUHAMMAD ISHAQ DAR MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE STATE OF KUWAIT, SALEM ABDULLAH AL-JABER AL-SABAH ON THE SIDELINES OF THE 15TH ISLAMIC SUMMIT IN BANJUL, THE GAMBIA.

## Pakistan, Kuwait to continue engagement for enhanced ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday held a meeting with the Foreign Minister of the State of Kuwait, Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on the margins of 15th OIC Islamic Summit being held in Banjul, Gambia.

The two leaders expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine and condemned Israel's ongoing war in Gaza.

They called on UNSC to take urgent steps for immediate ceasefire in Gaza and to facilitate increased and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza.

The deputy prime minister underscored the utmost priority of the government to transform the traditionally fraternal ties with Kuwait into a mutually beneficial economic partnership.

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GWADAR: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh inaugurates the Hengggeng & Agricultural Industrial Unit at North Free Zone.

## No compromise acceptable on provision of health services, says spokesman

QUETTA: The spokesman of Health Department has stated that no compromise is acceptable on provision of health services to the people.

This was stated by the spokesman of provincial Health Department here on Saturday.

He said that the Health Department has taken notice of the video

gone viral on social media about the Bolan Medical Complex Hospital.

The spokesman said that the report has been sought from the concerned responsible persons.

He also said that we are ascertaining the reality of the video gone viral on social media. The spokesman said that the action would be taken on the issue after bringing before the facts.

## Sadiq makes history, wins third term as London Mayor

LONDON: London Mayor Sadiq Khan has achieved a historic milestone, becoming the first politician to be elected as the Mayor of London for a third consecutive term.

Khan, who made history in 2016 by becoming the first Muslim mayor of London, secured a landslide victory, defeating Susan Hall, the candidate of the

ruling Conservative Party, by a significant margin.

According to British media reports, he received just over 1,088,000 votes (43.7%) to be re-elected, a majority of some 275,000 over Ms Hall, who secured just under 812,000 votes (32.6%).

Khan won an impressive 44% of the votes, while Hall trailed behind with 33%.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh and other high officials offering Namaz-e-Janaza of Shaheed ASI Raheem Khan



QUETTA: A representative delegation of Balochistan Civil Service Officers Association meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti

## PM Shehbaz to nominate Nawaz Sharif as PML-N president in key huddles

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was expected to nominate Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif as the party president in the key huddles, slated to happen next Saturday (May 11).

Sources divulged that the meetings of the party's central executive committee and core committee had been convened on May 11.

The invitations for the forthcoming meetings had also been issued.

According to the sources, it had not decided yet to change any other

organisational posts, with the expectation of the party president post.

Few days ago, former interior minister Rana Sanaullah said he personally urged Nawaz Sharif to resume his role as the party president.

Separately, PML-N senior leader Khawaja Saad Rafique, saying, "Everyone wants former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to spearhead the party."

"Now there is no constitutional obstacle for Nawaz Sharif to become the party president. Nawaz Sharif has been requested to take charge as the party president," he said.



SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Defense, Khawaja Muhammad Asif is addressing to media persons.

## RTA imposes ban on issuance of permits for new rickshaws in Quetta

QUETTA: The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) has imposed ban on the issuance of permits for new rickshaws in the Quetta city. According to an official notification issued here on Saturday, the ban has been imposed on issuance of new permits on the orders of Balochistan High Court.

According to the notification, the showroom owners have been asked not to bring more rickshaws for Quetta city.

The owners have also been directed to ensure re-

turn of the rickshaws present in their showrooms to the concerned companies within seven days.

Besides, new rickshaws may be brought according to the number fixed by RTA, it was further advised.

The rickshaws which were not returned to the concerned companies within a week would be impounded, it was stated in the notification.

The RTA sources said that the ban has been imposed on the permits of new rickshaws because of their influx in the city.

## Ambassador Hashmi speaks highly of Chang'e 6 project

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi spoke highly of the extensive global cooperation on China's Chang'e-6 mission, saying that this is a demonstration of international cooperation in action.

"Another milestone and good auspicious day for China, and for Pakistan-China friendship, but also for international cooperation. So, we see today China providing concrete example of a platform where European Space Agency, French and Italian

Space Agencies and Pakistan space agencies are coming together and making their contributions. This is a demonstration of international cooperation in action," the ambassador said in media talk with CGTN on the launch of Pakistan's first lunar satellite, in collaboration with China's Chang'e 6 mission.

"All of us have a shared future," he said adding that space cooperation on Friday's launch is a practical manifestation of sharing the benefits of technology with other countries.

## Aleem conducts aerial inspection of Sambrial Kharian Motorway

LAHORE (INP): In a move to ensure transparency and timely completion of national infrastructure projects, Minister of Communications, Privatization, and Investment Abdul Aleem Khan conducted an aerial inspection of the Sambrial Kharian Motorway and Lahore Ring Road projects.

During the visit, senior officials of the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) briefed the Minister on the progress of the Sambrial Kharian Motorway project.

Abdul Aleem Khan directed the authorities to expedite the construction work, emphasizing the need for international standards and timely completion.

The minister also inspected the construction work on Southern Loop 3 and Southern Loop 4 of the Lahore Ring Road, where he was briefed by National Highway Authority (NHA) officials. He reiterated his commitment to ensuring transparency and timely completion of construction projects of national importance, emphasizing the significance of these projects for the country's economic growth and development.



QUETTA: Provincial Health Minister Sardarzada Mir Faisal Khan Jamali and Secretary Health Abdullah Khan visiting different departments of Civil Hospital

## PTI again denied permission to hold rally at Bagh-e-Jinnah

KARACHI (INP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Karachi-East on Saturday refused to grant permission to the PTI to hold a rally at Bagh-e-Jinnah today (May 5th).

This is for the second time that the DC denied permission to the party to hold a public gathering at the venue.

PTI Sindh Secretary Information Ali Baloch said that a court was due to hear the application, seeking permission for the rally on May 6, and that the new date would be announced after the court hearing.

He further said that the party was looking up to the court to do justice in the case. "We have already started consultations to set a new date for the event," Baloch informed.



CALIFORNIA: World Affairs Council of Orange County, Los Angeles, hosted Ambassador Masood Khan during his visit to California.

## Govt decides to end subsidies to public officials

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to stop providing subsidies to government officials ahead of this month's planned discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on a new loan package.

According to media reports, the subsidy given to customs officers from grades 17 to 22 has been abolished.

Sources say that the subsidized house rent and medical charges to customs officers have been abolished.

According to sources, the customs officers were being given these incentives from the common pool fund, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) had ordered to end subsidies and incen-

tives from the common pool fund.

It is to be noted that there will be talks with the IMF this month on a new loan program, sources say that unnecessary subsidies and pension reforms will be part of the talks.

Earlier Friday, after Pakistan completed a short-term loan program of \$3 billion, a schedule was set between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for negotiations on a new major loan program.

The IMF delegation is scheduled to arrive in Pakistan on May 15 to discuss the new loan program. The mission will first negotiate at the technical level before moving on to policy-level discussions.



QUETTA: Provincial Health Minister Sardarzada Mir Faisal Khan Jamali and Secretary Health Abdullah Khan visiting different departments of Civil Hospital

## CACC constructs 'Modern Residential Complex' at Gwadar

GWADAR (INP): Since the finishing work of New Gwadar International Airport is in high gear, China Airport Construction Company (CACC) has successfully constructed "Modern Residential Complex". This is the last and final development that marks the completion of mega civil work of New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA).

The "Modern Residential Complex" comprising four residential buildings, a school and hospital will be used by designated officials of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Pakistan.

With a centrally air-conditioning system, NGIA's Modern Residential Complex has been facilitated by uninterrupted power dispensation, sewerage network and potable water pipelines. And Wi-Fi system is also in offing.

Besides, green area is also being developed around the residential complex to ensure healthier and liveable infrastructure and to make the outlook environment-friendly for the dwellers.

In the first phase, trees will be planted inside and outside the complex. Tree plants on designated patches will be grown to bolster the green ecosystem.

The government has also planned to get NGIA inspected by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and other security agencies like European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), and Transportation Security Administration (TSA).