

# Independent

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## Single-digit taxation not sustainable: Aiming to take tax-to-GDP ratio to 13pc in next 3 years: FM Aurangzeb

Govt negotiating with 'Banking Sector' to resolve liquidity issue of top export sectors; Govt protects low income groups in Budget 2024-25

ISLAMABAD (APP): Reiterating the pressing need for digitization and broadening of tax base, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb asserted here on Thursday that below 10 percent tax to GDP ratio was not sustainable for managing country's economy.

"We have to take it up to 13 percent in next three years gradually," the minister said while addressing the post-budget press conference, adding as per the international benchmark, no country could sustain at 9.5 tax to GDP ratio base without external assistance. Hence, there is a dire need to enhance tax to GDP ratio, the minister said.



The minister was flanked by State Minister for Finance, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Secretary Finance, Imdad Ullah Bosal and Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Amjad Zubair Tiwana.

Aurangzeb underscored the importance of doing away with undocu-

mented economy with end-to-end digitization to reduce human intervention as much as possible and make the tax mechanism transparent and mitigate chances of corruption.

The minister admitted that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) could not do compliance and enforcement to the extent it should

have done. He said, the government had introduced progressive taxes in the federal budget for upcoming fiscal year 2024-25 to impose more tax on high income earners.

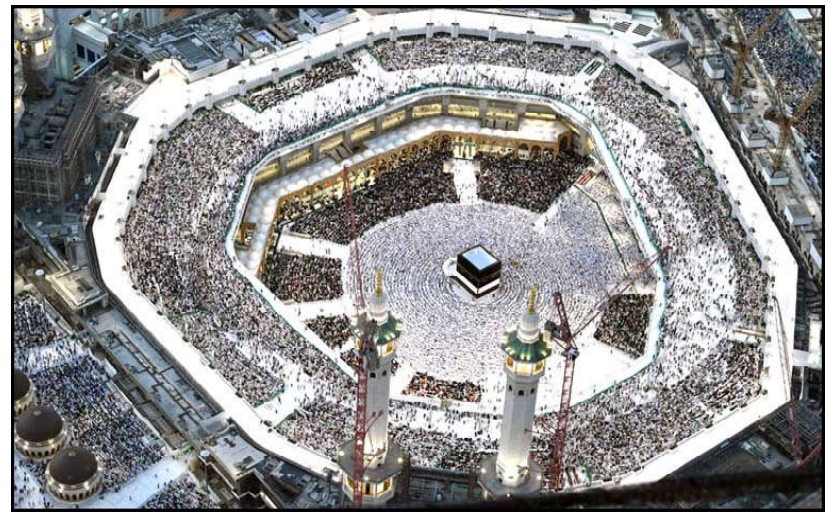
He said, the country needed to move on the direction of broadening tax base to make economy sustainable. Therefore, it was imperative to bring into tax net the retailers and wholesalers to share the burden.

He said, the government had launched tax scheme for retailers and wholesalers and they were offered to registration on volunteer basis, however it was termed unsuccessful. Later, in May 2024, the

minister added, FBR workforce mobilized itself, which resulted in registration of around 31,000 retailers with the scheme till date.

He said, the registration for the scheme would continue while tax would also be imposed from July 2024. "We have no other option but to get this sector into tax net," he remarked. The minister said that Point of Sale (PoS) prize scheme would be re-launched to do away with cash transactions.

To a question about Petroleum Development Levy (PDL), the minister said it would be increased gradually and in accordance with international oil prices.



MAKKAHALMUKARRAMAH: A beautiful view of the Khana Kaaba through rooftop of Clock Tower as a large number of pilgrims performing circumambulation (Tawaf).

## Meets Maulana Fazlur Rehman PM Shehbaz proposes committee to resolve political issues

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has proposed to JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to constitute committee to address political issues with mutual cooperation.

PM Shehbaz Sharif reached residence of Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Thursday to appease him. Maulana Fazlur Rehman welcomed PM.

PM lauded the religious services of Maulana

Fazlur Rehman. PM said Maulana always promoted peaceful struggle for safeguarding democratic norms. We hold it in high esteem.

Sources said PM sought support from Maulana Fazlur Rehman with reference to budget-2024 in the meeting.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman once again informed PM about his reservations regarding results of February election saying

we are struggling for democracy, transparent election and supremacy of constitution.

We wanted all democratic forces should play their role together for strengthening democracy. PM said we are convinced of your services for democracy

Sources said Maulana Atta ur Reman, Maulana Abdul Wasay and other leaders were also present in the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

## PM to pay special visit to Balochistan in couple of days to resolve issue of solarization of agri. tube wells

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has announced to pay special visit to Balochistan in next couple of days in order to resolve the issue of solarization of agricultural tube wells in the province seriously.

The Prime Minister was presiding over the meeting about solarization of the agricultural tube wells in Balochistan, in Islamabad on Thursday.

The Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti participated in the meeting through video link.

The meeting reviewed

in detail about converting the agricultural tube wells of the province on solar energy.

The Chief Minister on the occasion welcomed the visit of Prime Minister to the province and said that conversion of agricultural tube wells on solar energy is unavailable for ensuring uninterrupted supply of electricity to the zamindars of province z

He said that it is our endeavour that federal government may release Rs. 40 billion to resolve the issue at the earliest.

It would also enable us to resolve the issues being

faced by the zamindars of province.

The Chief Minister also appreciated the long term solution to the issue. However the funds which are required by the provincial government for resolving the issue should also be released duly.

He said that the dependency on QESCO would also be decreased for electricity supply with completion of the project, reducing the circular debt, adding he believed.

## Balochistan Youth Policy 2024 reviewed: Distances created between youth & State thru negative propaganda: CM

Chief Minister emphasizes youngsters can be kept away from anti-state activities by introducing health activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that the Balochistan Youth Policy 2024 would be compatible with the needs of youth of province.

He said that it is very necessary to provide opportunities of education, livelihood and development to the youth.

He said that it is a matter of great concern that distances were created between the youth and State through negative propaganda. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the youngsters away from anti-state activities by introducing healthy activities.

These and similar other views were expressed by the Chief Minister while chairing a review meeting on formulation of Balochistan Youth Policy 2024 here on Thursday.

The Member National Assembly, Nawabzada Jamal Raisani, concerned high ups, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Imran Zarkoon and spokes-

man of provincial government, Shahid Rind were in attendance at the meeting. The meeting reviewed the salient features of the Balochistan Youth Policy with the aim to formulate it according to the needs of youth.

The Secretary Youth Affairs, Tariq Qamar Baloch briefed the meeting about the salient features of Youth Policy.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister stressed the need to make the Youth Policy compatible with requirements of the modern day as well as needs of the youth, transgenders and jawans of all oppressed segments of the society.

He directed to prepare calendar of events for engaging youth in healthy activities. He also announced to hold Shaheed Siraj Raisani Football Tournament and Shaheed Professor Fazal Bari Cricket Tournament in the province.

He said that we have not forgotten our martyrs and they would be remembered forever.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti presiding over a meeting regarding formation of Youth Police 2024

## LEAs' IBO in Balochistan, terrorists arrested

QUETTA (INP): The law enforcement agencies in Balochistan province have arrested several dangerous terrorists by conducting a successful Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO).

According to the details, the intelligence agency and law enforcement agencies foiled the attempt to establish centers of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Balochistan.

Among those arrested is the most dangerous and wanted commander of the outlawed TTP.

According to the initial investigation, the fabric of the network meets internal and external terrorists. The arrested commander was involved in terrorist activities in different areas. Further investigation is going on, and important secrets are also expected to be revealed about the nexus of various terrorists present in the country.

## Afghan Consul General meets Mandokhail: Peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan in interest of whole region, says Governor

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Governor of Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has categorically stated that peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is in the interest of the whole region.

He said that Pakistan and Afghanistan are two brotherly neighbouring countries and neighbours do not change. This is why

establishing pleasant friendship and sustainable peace with the neighbouring countries is an important part of international relations.

The Governor was speaking to the Afghan Consul General based in Quetta, Maulvi Gul Hasan, who called on him here at the Governor House on Thursday.



JHELUM: Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi paying homage to ANF martyrs.

## Time has come to hold Israel accountable for its grave crimes: FO

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan says time has come to hold Israel accountable for its grave crimes, urging the global conscience to force Israel towards immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza.

At her weekly media briefing in Islamabad Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said it is also critical to bring an end to the war on people of Palestine.

She said Pakistan also welcomes the report of the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Occupied Palestinian territory including East Jerusalem and Israel.

## Naqvi attends funeral prayer of ANF martyrs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday attended the funeral prayer of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) personnel, Muhammad Gulzar, Mazhar Iqbal and Zeeshan, who were martyred in a firing incident by drug traffickers at Tarkai Toll Plaza Jhelum.

The Interior Minister met with the families of the martyrs and offered heartfelt condolences. He prayed for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks and for the patience of their loved ones.

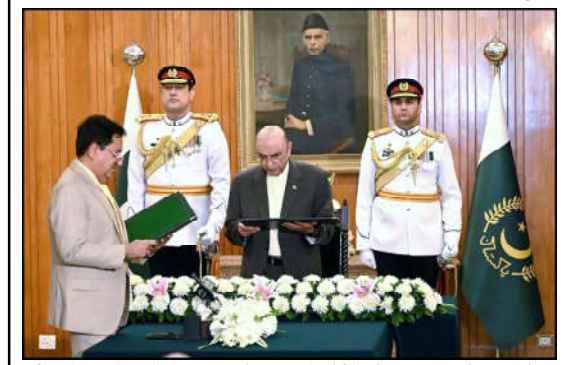
Mohsin Naqvi stated that the martyrs who have laid down their lives in the line of duty were our true heroes.

## President directs FIO to ensure prompt relief to aggrieved policyholders

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday directed the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO) to provide

Mumtaz Ali Shah, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

During the meeting, President Zardari high-



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari administering the oath of office to Mumtaz Ali Shah as the Federal Insurance Ombudsman during an oath-taking ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

speedy and free of charge justice to the aggrieved insurance policyholders against the maladministration of insurance companies.

He said that FIO needed to enhance its outreach and ensure quick disposal of complaints so that a maximum number of citizens could be provided monetary relief.

The president expressed these views while talking to the newly-appointed Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO)

lighted the need to create awareness about the role of FIO in providing justice to aggrieved policyholders in the settlement of insurance claims. He also advised the FIO to use modern technology and ICT tools to increase the disposal of complaints.

Earlier, the president administered the oath of office to Mumtaz Ali Shah as the Federal Insurance Ombudsman, at an oath-taking ceremony, held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Imran, Sheikh, Qureshi acquitted in Azadi March case

ISLAMABAD (Online): District and Sessions court Islamabad has acquitted PTI founder Imran Khan, Sheikh Rashid, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and others in Azadi March case.

Judicial magistrate Malik Muhammad Imran announced reserved judgment.

Case was registered against PTI founder, Sheikh

Rashid and others in 2022 on violation of section 144 and rioting clauses in police station 1-9.

The court also acquitted Sadaqat Abbasi and Ali Nawaz Awan.

It is pertinent to mention here that Anti Terrorism Court Lahore had extended bail of PTI founder in 3 cases related to Jinnah House attack case a day before.

## Punjab govt presents Rs5.4 trillion 'tax-free' budget

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Finance Minister Shujaat Rehman presented the provincial 'tax-free' budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 with a total outlay of 5.44 trillion amid protest by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

The finance minister laid before the House Rs 5446 billion budget with a surplus Rs 630 billion. He said that 77 new mega projects will be launched under the annual development plan.

Just like the centre, the Punjab government also



proposed a raise of up to 25 percent its employees' salaries while the pension of retired employees is proposed to be raised by 15 percent. The workers' minimum wage has been proposed to be raised Rs 37,000 from Rs 32,000.

In his budget speech, Shujaat Rehman claimed that no new taxes are imposed while existing taxes are not increased in the budget.

According to the budget documents, Rs 6 billion is earmarked for laptop scheme, Rs 5 billion endowment fund, Rs 268 billion for supplementary grants, Rs 26 billion for the supplementary budget statement of the financial year 2023-24, Rs 26 billion rupees for agricultural equipment, and Rs 10 billion Kisan card.

## PML-N has proven track record of pulling economy out of crisis: Ishaq Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif had a proven track record of pulling the country's economy out of crisis. Keeping in view the past performance, the deputy PM hoped to replicate the previous successes in the current tenure as well.

Addressing an event organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ishaq Dar said when the PML-N government was formed in 2013, all the in-



ternational rating agencies and financial institutions were indicating that Pakistan's economy was on the brink of default and that it would take 10 to 12 years to stabilize. However, he said that the PML-N government managed to stabilize the economy within three years due to its prudent policies.

## Attaullah Tarar says Empowerment of youth through skill based education key to country's progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Thursday that education was backbone of the society and economy and empowerment of youth through skill based education was vital for the progress of the country.

Talking to the media persons at an education ex-

position organised by a leading media group here, he said that such education exhibitions were a praise worthy step to provide opportunity to the students to get information about best universities of the world and make a good career choice. He said about 68 percent of the population of Pakistan comprised youth and such exhibitions would help them greatly in career counseling.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Budget for stabilisation**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's new budget for the next fiscal year has laid out some ambitious targets — in line with the demands of the IMF to help Pakistan strengthen its case for a larger and longer bailout so that it can anchor its newfound economic stability of the last one year. Overall, the budget seeks to boost the government's tax revenues by over 40pc to Rs12.97tr from a projected collection of Rs9.25tr during the outgoing year through significant tax measures. The average annual increase in tax collection during the last five years has averaged around 20pc and is estimated to be 30pc this year. The additional tax measures of Rs2.2tr, equal to 1.8pc of GDP, seek to broaden the scope of consumption tax, significantly increase the existing personal tax burden on salaried and non-salaried individuals, do away with tax exemptions for various sectors of the economy, bring some untaxed incomes into the net, tighten the noose around non-filers, and boost the petroleum levy by Rs20 per litre to Rs80. The remaining increase of Rs1.5tr in tax revenues is expected to come from a nominal expansion in the economy due to a targeted inflation rate of 12pc and 3.6pc GDP growth.

The additional tax measures and the proposed increase in the petroleum levy will help raise the tax-to-GDP ratio for next year to an estimated 11.5pc of the size of the economy from this year's estimated 9.6pc. Another major goal of the budget is to produce a primary surplus of 1pc of the size of the economy to hold down its fiscal deficit to 6.8pc for debt sustainability. The deficit would be further slashed to 5.9pc provided the provinces also throw up a surplus of Rs1.2tr as envisaged in the budget. While the measures announced by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb are a step in the right direction, and seek to tax 'sacred cows' such as real estate investors, stock investors, exporters, the retail supply chain, and the like, these lack any "disruptive policy changes", and represent incremental measures towards documentation of the economy. Perhaps, political conditions in the country are not conducive for the government to implement the radical measures needed for taking a major leap towards boosting the economy. However, while the tax and deficit targets are ambitious, it is not impossible to pull those off. Yet doubts remain about the authorities' ability to enforce the new measures fully and ensure greater compliance. While the government has raised the tax collection target to narrow the fiscal gap, the budget makes little effort to cut expenditure. Though, in his budget speech, the finance minister talked about 'right-sizing' the government, he did not announce any tangible policy measure in this direction. Rather the total current expenditure is estimated to surge by 21pc to Rs17.2tr, with power and other subsidies jumping to Rs1.4tr and defence expenditure by 14pc to Rs2.1tr. Likewise, the consolidated development expenditure of the centre and provinces has been spiked by over 58pc to nearly Rs3.8tr as the government hopes to kick-start moderate economic growth through its spending on large infrastructure projects, in the absence of any appetite for new investment in the private sector. Apart from accessing the IMF funds, the other major objective of the new budget is to shore up the stability it managed in the last one year. While fiscal consolidation aimed for in the budget will likely deepen stability, sustainable economic recovery remains dependent upon foreign flows from multilateral and bilateral partners.

**Lionised in London**

F.S. Aijazuddin

Whoever designed Istanbul airport must have been inspired by the phrase: 'Walk that extra mile'. Passengers have to walk over endless travelators until they reach the immigration counters. Turkey admits only the fittest.

The extra exercise would have been less exacting, had one not spent 10 days treading the unyielding pavements of London. Fortunately, like the food there, the weather has changed. Gone the sooty smog of childhood, the Spartan meals, the lockdown on Sundays, the after-effects even into the mid-1950s of wartime rationing.

Today's London is a vast epicurean table, with cuisine from every kitchen: Greek, Ethiopian, Indonesian, even Mexican chipotles. Reverse colonialism has conquered Britain. The Vikings brought power; the Romans civics and law; the colonies brought curries.

Khushwant Singh would have been delighted to learn that the final day of his KSLF 2024 ended in Cambridge. He loved Britain as only a foreigner can — with a recurring, unrequited, one-sided passion.

A speaker in Cambridge (a Brit-Pak professor of English at Bristol University) introduced her unforgiving diatribe against her father. It was patrician in print. Her father had been a professor of medicine at Lahore's premier medical college. He was insensitive to a fault.

Candid in another way was Lord Simon of Salford, Master of Christ's College. He had retired after over 40 years of distinguished service in the Foreign & Commonwealth Relations Office. He spoke openly about Brexit and sub-continental politics.

One of the oldest at-

tendees at KSLF Cambridge was the indefatigable nonagenarian Sir Nicholas Barrington, the former ambassador/high commissioner to Pakistan (1987-1994). Still active, he distributed freely his latest analysis on Afghanistan.

Cambridge University, like almost all British educational institutions now, is an academic campus of Chinatown. Once, seeing a foreign face in the UK was a rarity. Now, a British profile is hard to come by.

Interestingly, the Chinese tourists in Cambridge and in London were not geriatrics fulfilling the dream of a lifetime but young Sino-yuppies, tramping confidently over their British domain like the Roman legions did after their conquest of Britain in 55 BCE. Chinese restaurants in London are cheap, cheerful, and a chopstick's length away from every home.

Ethnicity is no longer a novelty, as the In-dian craft shops reeking of incense once were. It is part of British multicultural identity.

Certainly the most startling evidence of this fusion could be seen in the currently popular musical The Book of Mormon. However much one had heard of its shocking profanity, nothing prepared one for the actual performance. The theme seemed innocuous enough — the plight of white Mormon missionaries sent to convert black natives in Uganda.

The loud lyrics and the uninhibited choreography though oscillated between heresy (for Mormons), blasphemy (for monotheists), and racial racism (for those of any colour). Judging from the cheers that greeted every solo, some in the audience had seen the show before. Obviously they craved more profanity.

The antidote to this unnerving cultural onslaught lay in the calming

exhibition on Ranjit Singh: Sikh, Warrior, King, on display until October at the Wallace Collection in Manchester Square. The Wallace collection is a private benefaction by the Hertford family, comprising "fine and decorative arts from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with important holdings of French 18<sup>th</sup>-century paintings, furniture, arms and armour, and Old Master paintings".

Appropriately, the Sikh exhibition is derived from the private collection of a modern Sikh benefactor Davinder Toor. He has amassed an enviable tosha-khana of rare relics and precious objects associated with the Sikh Raj during 19<sup>th</sup>-century Punjab. The exhibition is a tour de force of scholarship, design and imaginative display. For those who yearned for choices, there was on offer English tea and sandwiches on one floor and lassi and nimbupani a floor below.

Many of the exhibits on display had been filched by the East India Company following the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. These include Ranjit Singh's golden throne. In a moment of imperial hubris, Lord Dalhousie commissioned a copy in wood for himself to sit in, enthroned in solitary splendour in his English manor. Also on show are a rarely seen ornate belt studded with large emeralds from Maharaja Ranjit Singh's fabled treasury. The East India Company surrendered them to Queen Victoria after she remarked how much better they would look in her collection.

An associated lecture on 19<sup>th</sup>-century paintings by the Hungarian artist August Schoeffel in the Princess Bamba collection in Lahore Fort brought Lahore and London together. The Lion of the Punjab is at last being lionised in London. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Slog sloganeers**

Shahzad Sharjeel

As was expected, the BJP, or should one say, Narendra Modi, has won the general election in India. What has proven wrong are assertions like 'abki baar, char sau paar', which alluded to the BJP's aspiration to win more than 400 seats in the 543-strong Lok Sabha. Even another interpretation that it meant the BJP would cross that mark with the respective victories of its allied parties proved incorrect. Shashi Tharoor's response, as the BJP slogan, 'abki bar Tihar', an allusion to the infamously tough prison in India, an equivalent of Mach jail on this side of the border, was more a case of wishful thinking than a rallying call and would remain so.

The BJP's opponents in south India criticise it for being a Hindi-belt party only. The election results have defied this label somewhat, as the BJP has expanded the spread of its constituencies in the south, if not the total number of seats, from 2019. However, Indian national politics is generally conducted in Hindi/Sanskrit idiom, ie, 'Bharat jodo' and 'Nyay yatra's of Rahul Gandhi and 'Hindu rashtira' to 'Ram raj' of the Sangh Parivar.

That our politics is stagnant is axiomatic, but the staleness of political sloganeers, particularly during the rough and tumble of electioneering, points to a lack of creativity and acumen. Mainstream political parties in Pakistan are not the only culprits; pressure groups and non-electoral entities are equally unimaginative when it comes to capturing and galvanising public aspirations.

Slogans that gained currency across the political divide soon be-

came jaded with overuse and failure to build upon the narrative. These include a not-so-veiled reference to the military's influence in every sphere of life, in which the uniform is cited to explain away every conceivable situation, except perhaps for 'andey mein jo zardi hai...' 'Zardi' means yolk. Thank goodness for this, as the proverbial egg is on all our faces.

Slurs like 'chor', 'ghadar', 'Dirty Harry', 'diesel', 'youthey', insinuating corruption, treason, conspiracy, smuggling, and affiliation with the youth-driven PTI, respectively, vitiate the atmosphere aplenty but do not reflect any aspiration or even a call to action by their proponents. 'Software update' and 'half-fry', 'full-fry' euphemisms for security agencies' extrajudicial measures can only be shrugged at.

Unlike the Shubb Laxmi and Ladi Behna welfare schemes across the border, the title of our safety net flagship, Benazir Income Support Programme, does little more than commemorate her services to the country. Branding of similar social safety net schemes introduced subsequently also fails to inspire a sense of inclusion. Like the 1990s, which saw a rise in party songs as an important part of branding, the building up of the PTI and dharna culture, especially from 2013 onwards, saw the rise of DJs, drone coverage, and all-night jamming sessions at political rallies. Shipping containers' reputation as roadblocks was salvaged as they began to be used as a home away from home for the dharna leadership, vanity vans of sorts for the vain. Meanwhile, the multitudes had to face the elements under the sky, albeit accompanied by the carefully

curated beats and songs of Esakhelwi who lent his creative genius to PTI campaigns but eventually got as disillusioned as the DJ who reportedly got short changed over the 'concert fees'.

Sindh continues to live under the Elvis fan club delusion. The only innovation since 'zinda hai Bhutto' has been a proclivity to add 'shaheed' as a prefix or suffix to every party leader's name. Such is the fervour in this regard that leaders with healthy vital signs are sometimes called martyrs.

Balochistan continues to aspire to 'sahil, wasail par haq' (right over land and maritime resources), KP yearns for 'akhpal khawri, akhpal ikhtiar' (our soil, our choice). Punjab has the dubious honour of inventing damp squibs like 'vote ko izzat do' and parochial wake-up calls like 'jaag Punjabi jaag.' While our countrymen in Gilgit-Baltistan struggle for constitutional rights, their current rallying call, 'wheat subsidy', is uninspiring and lacking in ambition. The Seraiki belt is the most focused, and spot-on, with its singular cry for 'waseb' (sociopolitical living space). The slogan comprehensively relays the region's aspirations.

Now that the electoral frenzy in India has peaked, does one expect the political and communal temperature to go down? Will the strain in the BJP-RSS marriage result in less froth and fire aimed both at home and abroad, or should one brace for double trouble? It remains to be seen what becomes of the 'lath lahrao Modi' (wave the staff, Modi) brigade now that the spouses are considering a separation, if not an outright divorce. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**MNA hails budget as comprehensive, public friendly**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Member National Assembly (MNA) Dr Shaista Khan Thursday termed the budget 2024-25 a balanced budget which reflects Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's concern for downtrodden people of the country where salaried class' rights were being protected.

Talking to a PTV news channel, she said the working class as well as pensioners had been given a reasonable raise in their wages, which was an appreciable measure.

Unlike the previous budgets this government's budget will reduce the gap between the rich and the poor segments of society,

she said, adding, that the funds approved in the budget for development projects will open a new era of progress and prosperity. The federal government has presented a budget aligned with public expectations, with significant allocations for welfare projects, particularly addressing the needs of the working class and government employees, she mentioned.

She also appreciated the increased allocation of the Benazir Bhutto Income Support Programme and congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his cabinet for announcing a historical budget.



RAWALPINDI: A worker busy in preparing new grills to be used for Barbecue ahead of Eid ul Ahzai at his workplace, Pirwahai.

**Huawei Tech Connect 2024, a commercial market event to target SMEs for Pakistan**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Huawei Technologies Pakistan has successfully executed Huawei Tech connect 2024, on Thursday. This event was focused on bringing Digital Transformation to the SME sector of Pakistan, revolutionizing the way organizations operate with a steadfast approach towards improving the ICT landscape of Pakistan, said a press release. The cross-industry event focused on tackling IT infrastructure challenges of various sectors including Education, Pharma, Energy,

Banks, Real Estate, HealthCare and Retail. The event has given industry related experts to share their insights, interact and network with one another to discuss modern world technology challenges and how Huawei's cutting edge solutions can make organizations stay one step ahead of them. Over 100+ customers participated, representing a broad spectrum of industries. Also High-profile attendees, including C-level customers from key organizations were present.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on digitisation of the Federal Board of Revenue.

**PM vows to launch crackdown against tax evaders, facilitators**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday vowed to launch a crackdown against the tax evaders and their facilitators saying that he would leave no stone unturned to eliminate them.

He was chairing a high level meeting at the PM House to discuss tax reforms, digitization of the economy and measures to boost revenues.

Emphasizing the importance of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister said the Board played an important role in running n the economic wheel and

pledged to provide all necessary resources for its human resource development and digitization.

He said during the budget preparations, he had issued clear directives to bring more people in the tax net and that the elites should be made to pay their due taxes.

He said minimum taxes were imposed on the middle and lower classes in the recent budget.

He said decreasing the tax rate and expanding the tax net was the government's top priority, which was already working

to ensure complete digitization of the tax system and enhance the capacity building of the workforce.

The prime minister also stressed the need of documenting the economy and increasing the tax collection through digital means. He directed the authorities to take a swift action to bring more people in the tax net.

The representatives of international firm McKinsey and Karandaaz briefed the prime minister about the past four weeks' progress with respect to increasing the revenues and

**Reform plan chalked out to remove the deficiencies in the power sector: Awais**

**US Treasury Dept delegation meets Minister for Power**

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the US Department of Treasury led by Assistant Secretary Brent Neiman met Federal Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Leghari here Thursday.

The meeting aimed at exploring potential collaborations in the energy sector, said a press release. Sardar Awais Leghari said that the reform plan has been chalked out to remove the deficiencies in the power sector. The purpose of these reforms

is to improve the energy mix of Pakistan and eliminate other deficiencies of the power sector, it further said. The minister informed the Secretary that reforms are being implemented to increase private sector participation in the distribution and transmission of electricity in Pakistan. These reforms aim to improve the quality of service being delivered to the people of Pakistan, he said.



QUETTA: Member Board of Investment Muhammad Asif Bazai meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

**Stocks diverge after US Fed rate cut plans**

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets diverged on Thursday as traders reacted to the US Federal Reserve's plan to only cut interest rates once this year.

Europe was trading firmly in the red, with Paris and Frankfurt shedding more than one percent each as investors continued to track fallout from far-right gains in last weekend's EU elections. Wall Street had a mixed opening as the tech-heavy Nasdaq and the S&P 500 climbed while the Dow slipped back.

The euro recovered from sharp losses against the dollar in recent sessions, after French President Emmanuel Macron said he would not resign should his party lose snap elections he called after its drubbing by the far right in EU-wide polls. In the United States, the Federal Reserve left its key lending rate unchanged on Wednesday and pencilled in just one rate cut this year, down from the three expected in March. Despite US annual inflation dipping to 3.3 percent last month, the fall was below expectations, while the consumer price index remains comfortably above the Fed's two-percent target. "Fed chair Jerome Powell didn't give a huge amount away, although it felt telling that he was fairly cautious about the cooler-than-expected inflation figures from earlier in the day."

**Murtaza bids farewell to PAAPAM, joins ICCI as SG**

LAHORE (INP): Ghulam Murtaza, a distinguished veteran in trade organizations transitioned from his role at PAAPAM to become the Secretary-General of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

GM's significant and far-reaching contributions to Pakistan's engineering manufacturing and auto parts industry were celebrated during a grand dinner in Lahore, where PAAPAM recognized its exceptional service to the engineering community.

**FBR to relaunch POS scheme soon: Chairman FBR**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana informed on Thursday that the board would soon relaunch the Point of Sale (POS) prize scheme.

Speaking at the post-budget press conference, he said that the scheme was previously closed due to some deceiving activities. The chairman added that currently, over Rs. 1 billion is available in the POS account.

It is worth mentioning that, the first computerized draw of the POS Prize Scheme was held on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup>

**Pak total liquid foreign reserves recorded as \$14.38 billion**

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 14,383.8million as of June 07, 2024 while the reserves held by the central bank recorded as \$ 9,103.3 million.

The foreign reserves held by the central bank decreased by \$ 6 million to \$ 9,103.3 million during the week ended on June 07, 2024, a statement issued here on Thursday by SBP informed adding that net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were recorded as \$ 5,280.5 million.



## Kundi offers minorities to hold festivals in Governor House

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday said the minorities have played a pivotal role in enhancing the country's prestige and image at national and international level and the nation is proud of the role of those deployed at higher posts from this segment.

Talking to minority groups of different religions including Christians, Hindus, Parsi, Sikh and others here, the Governor said the religious festivals of the minorities will be held at Governor's House.

On the occasion, Secretary Finance and Coordination PPP, Farzand Ali Wazir, heads of the delegations including Bishop Humphry Sarfaraz Peter, Church of Pakistan Pushup Ernest Jacob, Haunch Hashmat, Chairman Assembly of God Church Masih Pastor,

PPP president Naseeb Chan, Dr Sawera Parkash, General Secretary Yaisr Bahatti and others were present.

The Governor said that Pakistan Peoples Party accorded prime priority to the welfare of the minorities whether it was the increase in Senate seats or protection of rights of the minorities at assembly floor.

He said that he was thankful to his party for imposing confidence in his services adding that he would try his best to come up to the expectations of his party leadership. "I am not the Governor from PPP but from all the parties of the province", he added.

"I am well aware of the problems faced by the minority segments of the society in the past but will try my best to compensate for those shortcomings".

The Governor further said that he was thankful

to the Party for honoring him with governorship of the province and headship of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Today, he said the minority delegations which came to the Governor House consisted of all the political parties and not only from PPP.

The Governor maintained that half of the national cricket team comprised of players from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but sadly our historical cricket ground, Arbab Niaz Stadium was yet to be completed despite passage of 10 years. There is no First-Class Cricket in the province for a long time, he added.

Kundi further assured the delegations that he would not let down the minorities and a special quota for them would be created in educational institutions adding that all other missing privileges would be provided to them.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi in a group photo with representative delegation of minorities who called on him at Governor House.

## AJK gov committed to take climate change mitigation measures: Forest minister

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Minister for Forest Muhammad Akmal Sargala on Thursday said Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government intends to initiate number of reforestation measures including green Pakistan program (GPP) and protection of forests to mitigate climate change effects.

Talking to a group of journalists, Sargala said that billion tree projects was successfully

implemented in the region planting millions of tree at different forest enclosures throughout the three division of the region and the results will be witnessed within few years with the growth of newly planted trees.

"GPP will be 100 percent funded by the federal government while in other provinces, 50 percent funds would be provided by the provincial governments," he disclosed adding that

the initiative would be started during the new fiscal year.

He said the government was taking strict measures for the protection and conservation of forests besides growing new forests including enforcement of ban on cutting of trees in letter and spirit while measures have been taken to overcome the damages being caused by wild fire and other activities.

## HITEC University showcases innovative student projects

WAH CANTT (APP): HITEC (Heavy Industries Taxila Education City) University held its 10<sup>th</sup> Open House on Thursday, showcasing the impressive final-year projects of students from various engineering disciplines.

The event was graced by the presence of the Chief Guest, Professor Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, the Executive Director of the Higher Education Commission. The Open House and Job Fair featured a total of 150 Final Year Design Projects (FYDPs) across different engineering fields.

This included 44 projects from the Mechanical Engineering department, covering areas such as robotics, automotive, defense systems, human aid

systems and solar technology.

The Electrical Engineering department presented 18 projects focused on the efficient integration of renewable energy into power systems.

The Software Engineering and Computer Science departments exhibited 64 projects emphasizing robotics, machine learning, artificial intelligence, surveillance systems and human aid systems.

The Civil Engineering department showcased 14 projects related to construction technologies and the Computer Engineering department presented 10 projects centered on artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT).

## 4 MC employees die of electric shock at Dijkot disposal station

FAISALABAD (APP): Four officials of Municipal Committee Dijkot were killed and two others including a rescue official sustained injuries when they suffered fatal electric shock while repairing a water pump in a well of disposal station on Thursday. According to Rescue-1122, five officials of the Municipal Committee Dijkot were repairing an electric water pump at a disposal station near the graveyard of Chak No 263-RB when they received an electric shock.

As a result, four officials were killed on-the-spot. They included Shafique (35), Asgar (40), an electrician; Haji Burhan (40) and Arsalan (36). Another official Hamid and a rescue official Nasir also suffered electric shock.

## Minister says: Malakand people to soon have modern healthcare facilities

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Works and Communication (C&W), Shakil Ahmad and Health Minister, Sayyed Qasim Ali Shah have said that steps on urgent basis were needed to provide modern healthcare facilities to the people of Malakand. The prime focus of the incumbent KP government was to ensure provision of best possible medical cover to the people at their doorstep. The ministers said this during a

meeting held to review health facilities in Malakand district on Thursday. The meeting was also attended by the MPA Gul Ibrahim, Secretary Health Department Mehmood Aslam, DG Health, DHO Malakand, MS Hospital and relevant officials.

Minister C&W said there was a need to upgrade rural health centers (RHCs), basic health units (BHUs), and address the issue of staff shortage at hospitals besides equipping the health.

## DC visits Nullah Lai to inspect dredging work

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, Hassan Waqar Cheema here on Thursday visited Nullah Lai and inspected the ongoing dredging and desilting work. The DC also visited other city areas and reviewed the cleanliness work of different major nullahs of the city. The ongoing dredging and desilting work of Nullah Lai should be completed before the start of monsoon rains, the DC said adding that special attention should be given to cleaning all main nullahs particularly vulnerable points near low-lying areas.

## Punjab govt presents public friendly budget: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Communication and Works (C&W) and Law Sohaib Ahmed Bharth has said that the Punjab government has given public friendly budget with an inimitable relief to low-income citizens of the province in all sectors.

In a statement, he termed this budget as people centric which is the aim of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. The minimum wage of the worker has been increased from thirty-two thousand to thirty-seven thousand which will give a relief to workers. He added the government has taken

decisions only to uplift the economy of the country.

Sohaib Ahmad Bharth further said that it has been the top priority of the Chief Minister Punjab to provide maximum relief to the citizens and it is reflected in the provincial budget. The Punjab province is now on the track of unshakable progress and there will be less inflation in days to come, he remarked. The country is coming out of economic crisis which is a good omen, he added. He disclosed that a sufficient budget has been earmarked for road sectors and for the upgradation of existing infrastructure of the province.



FAISALABAD: Prof. Dr. Zill-i-Huma Nazki, Vice Chancellor (VC) Government College Women University Faisalabad (GCWUF) viewing displayed paintings and art work displayed during the Art and Design exhibition (Degree Show 2024) at Government College Women University Faisalabad.

## Efforts to deal with adverse effects of climate change: CM's aide

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Advisor to KP CM on Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jehan has said that the adverse effects of climate change are a big threat to the society and the provincial government is making all possible effort to deal with these challenges. He expressed these views while addressing a climate change related seminar titled 'Faith Communities Together for Climate Justice' here at the University of Peshawar on Thursday.

The seminar was organized under the auspices of the Department of Criminology in collaboration with Outreach Assistance to Humanity wherein the Advisor to KP CM on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif was chief guest. The advisor to KP CM said that the previous PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had initiated Billion Tree Tsunami Plantation Project while its central government had launched 10 Billion Tree.

## International News

### US, Europe clear way to \$50B Ukraine loan in deal to tie up Russian assets until Moscow pays for war

Monitoring Desk BORGO EGNAZIA: The United States and European countries have agreed to lock up sanctioned Russian assets until Moscow pays reparations for its invasion of Ukraine, a senior U.S. official said Thursday. The move clears the way for leaders to announce a \$50 billion loan package for Kyiv at the Group of Seven summit, where President Joe Biden is set to sign a security agreement with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The highly anticipated agreement will leverage interest and income from the more than \$260 billion in frozen Russian assets, largely held in Europe, to secure a \$50 billion loan from the U.S. and additional loans from other partners. The first disbursements will be made this year, but it will take time for Ukraine to use all the money, the official said. The official spoke

on the condition of anonymity to preview the agreement, which will be included in the G7 leaders' communique on Friday.

Ukraine will be able to spend the money in several areas, including for military, economic and humanitarian needs and reconstruction, the official said. The leaders' statement will also leave the door open to confiscating the Russian assets entirely, for which the allies have yet to secure the political will, largely citing legal and financial stability concerns. Biden will meet on Thursday with Zelenskyy to discuss a bilateral security agreement between the U.S. and Ukraine, as the international group of wealthy democracies has been looking for new ways to bolster Ukraine's defenses against Russia. They planned a joint news conference afterward.

The agreement on how

to use the frozen Russian assets to benefit Ukraine comes several months after the White House broke through a logjam in Congress that stalled approval of some \$60 billion in U.S. aid for Ukraine. The delay gave Russia time to make up ground on the battlefield. Earlier Thursday, Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, described the security pact as a "real marker" of the U.S. commitment to Ukraine, "not just for this month and this year, but for the many years ahead." Zelenskyy, on social media, said the document is "unprecedented, as it should be for leaders who support Ukraine." Sullivan said the agreement would not commit U.S. troops directly to Ukraine's defense against Russia's invasion. That is a red line drawn by Biden, who does not want to have the U.S. pulled into a direct conflict with nuclear-armed Moscow.



Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, U.S. President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida attend a session on Africa, climate change and development on the first day of the G7 summit at the Borgo Egnazia resort, in Savelletri, Italy

### Gaza war rages as US wants to 'close' truce deal

Monitoring Desk DOHA: Top US diplomat Antony Blinken said Wednesday (June 12) that an elusive truce and hostage release deal to end the Gaza war was still possible, wrapping up a Middle East tour as deadly fighting rocked the Palestinian territory.

Lebanon's Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, rained rockets on northern Israel, a day after an Israeli strike killed one of its senior commanders.

Secretary of State Blinken, in Doha for the last stop of a tour to promote President Joe Biden's Gaza ceasefire roadmap, said the United States would work

with regional partners to "close the deal".

Hamas late Tuesday submitted its response to mediators Qatar and Egypt, and Blinken said some of the proposed amendments "are workable and some are not".

A senior Hamas official, Osama Hamdan, said it sought "a permanent ceasefire and complete withdrawal" of Israeli troops from Gaza, demands rejected by Israel.

The three-stage plan endorsed by the UN Security Council and Arab powers - includes a six-week ceasefire, a hostage-prisoner exchange and Gaza's internationally-backed reconstruction.

### Zelensky lands in Saudi Arabia on unannounced visit

Monitoring Desk RIYADH: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky travelled to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, Saudi state media reported, his latest visit to the Gulf kingdom which has sought to stay neutral in Ukraine's war with Russia.

Zelensky landed in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah for the unannounced trip and was greeted by Saudi officials including the national security adviser and ambassador to Kyiv, the official Saudi Press Agency said. No details on his itinerary were immediately available.

### Fistfight erupts in Italian Parliament as tensions rise over expanding regional autonomy

Monitoring Desk ROME: Tensions in Italy's lower house erupted into a fistfight, sending an opposition lawmaker to hospital, over a controversial government proposal that opponents say will further impoverish the poor south.

Video of the fight Wednesday shows lawmakers converging on 5-Star Movement lawmaker Leonardo Donno, who opposes the changes, after he

tried to hand an Italian flag to regional affairs minister Roberto Calderoli. Calderoli, a firebrand lawmaker from the Lega party with northern roots, drafted the contested expansion of regional autonomy that would mostly benefit regions like Lega strongholds of Veneto and Lombardy. Italian media reported that Donno was taken to the hospital for evaluation after being hit in the head and the chest.

### Heavy rocket fire from Lebanon at northern Israel

Monitoring Desk JERUSALEM: Air raid sirens sounded across cities in northern Israel on Thursday and about 40 rockets had been fired from Lebanon in the afternoon, Israel's military said.

State broadcaster Kan aired footage of numerous mid-air interceptions of rockets above Israeli towns, including in Safed, some 12 km (7.5 miles) from the border.

### WHO says many people in Gaza facing 'famine-like conditions'

Monitoring Desk GENEVA: The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday (June 12) that many people in Gaza were facing "catastrophic hunger and famine-like conditions".

"A significant proportion of Gaza's population is now facing catastrophic hunger and famine-like conditions," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"Despite reports of increased delivery of food, there is currently no evidence that those who need it most are receiving sufficient quantity and quality of food."

Tedros said there were more than 8,000 children under five years old who had been diagnosed and treated for acute malnutrition, including 1,600 children with severe acute malnutrition.

"However, due to insecurity and lack of access, only two stabilisation centres for severely malnourished patients can operate," he added.

"Our inability to provide health services safely, combined with the lack of clean water and sanitation, significantly increases the risk of malnourished children."

The war in Gaza began on Oct. 7 when militants led by Hamas killed 1,200 Israelis and took more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's response has caused the deaths of more than 37,000 Palestinians, according to the Gazan health ministry.

try to bridge the gaps. And I believe those gaps are bridgeable," Blinken said.

"That doesn't mean they will be bridged because, ultimately, Hamas has to decide," he said.

"The longer this goes on, the more people will suffer, and it's time for the haggling to stop."

He added: "I believe it's absolutely necessary to try our hardest to do it. But there's no guarantee."

Hamas proposed amendments late Tuesday including a ceasefire timeline and the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, according to a source familiar with the talks.

The plan Biden laid out on May 31 calls for an Israeli withdrawal from "major population centres" and a ceasefire for six weeks, which could then be extended if negotiators need more time to seek a permanent deal.

Blinken declined to elaborate on the Hamas demands.

### Blinken says US will try to bridge Israel-Hamas gaps on deal

Monitoring Desk DOHA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed Wednesday to work to seal a Gaza ceasefire agreement, saying not all Hamas demands were acceptable but voicing hope gaps could be closed.

Consulting with key mediator Qatar on the Hamas response to the plan outlined by US President Joe Biden, Blinken said the Palestinian group could have given a "clear and simple yes" but voiced guarded hope for moving forward.

"We believe that some of the requested changes are workable and some are not," Blinken told reporters in Doha.

"And so we have to see on an urgent basis over the course of the coming days whether those gaps are bridgeable."

But he said the onus was on Hamas, describing the rest of the world as united in seeking an end to the eight-month war.

"We're determined to

### Nigeria's president says economic reforms will continue despite hardships

Monitoring Desk ABUJA: Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu said on Wednesday economic reforms would continue despite increasing hardships that have fuelled public anger, and promised to send an executive bill to parliament soon to set a new minimum wage.

Tinubu, who came to power a year ago, removed a decades-old petrol subsidy that kept prices artificially low and devalued the currency, sending inflation soaring to 33.69% in April, its highest level in nearly three decades and eroding incomes.

In a television broadcast to mark Democracy Day, Tinubu acknowledged hardships caused by the reforms, which also include higher interest rates and the partial removal of electricity subsidies, but he said this would create a stron-

ger foundation for future growth.

"Our economy has been in desperate need of reform for decades. It has been unbalanced because it was built on the flawed foundation of over-reliance on revenues from the exploitation of oil," Tinubu said. "As we continue to reform the economy, I shall always listen to the people and will never turn my back on you."

Nigeria is grappling with the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades and labour unions last week suspended a strike called to pressure the government to agree a new monthly minimum wage. The government has offered to double the minimum wage to 62,000 naira (\$41.89) a month against labour demands of 250,000 naira, and Tinubu said his government had negotiated in good faith.

### UN expert voices for American held in Afghanistan

Monitoring Desk GENEVA: The Taliban must provide Ryan Corbett, an American held in Afghanistan for nearly two years, with immediate medical care to prevent irreparable harm to his health or even his death, a United Nations expert said on Thursday.

"The Taliban must provide Ryan Corbett with medical treatment in a civilian hospital without delay," said Alice Jill Edwards, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Corbett, an aid worker, has been held without charge in conditions "utterly inadequate and substantially below international standards," she said. "This is having a significant impact on his physical and mental health, which is declining rapidly," added Edwards.





ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on ease of doing business.

## EU's Team Technical & Vocational Education & Training Support Prog. to bear best results: CM

**Independent Report**  
 QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that the Team Europe's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Support Programme has immense importance for youth of the province and it would bear best results in collaboration with the provincial government.

The Chief Minister was addressing the launch ceremony of TVET Support Programme here at a local hotel on Thursday. The Ambassador of EU in Islamabad, Dr. Riina Kionka, Consul General of Germany to Karachi, Dr. Rudiger Lotz, provincial government functionaries, experts and other concerned high ups were present on the occasion.

The Chief Minister on the occasion appreciated the launching of Team Europe's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Support Programme and said that we are indebted to the EU in this regard. He said that such programmes are contributing a lot in imparting modern training to the young-  
 sters. He also referred to the plan of provincial government regarding sending some 30,000 youngsters for training abroad during couple of years. He believed that we would achieve the goal with devotion. The EU's ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka, German Consul General Dr. Rudiger Lotz and others also addressed the ceremony. Later, Chief Minister formally launched the Team Europe's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Support Programme.

## WAPDA awards Rs. 10.6b contract for Dargai Rehabilitation Project

LAHORE (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has awarded the contract for civil and electro-mechanical works for rehabilitation of Dargai Hydel Power Station worth Rs. 10.6 billion to a Joint Venture (JV), comprising two Chinese and a Pakistani firm. General Manager (Hydel Development) WAPDA Ihsan Ullah and authorized representative of the JV Nabeel Tahir signed the contract on behalf of their organizations. Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt. Gen. (Retd) Sajjad Ghani, Member (Power) WAPDA Jamil Akhtar, WAPDA officers, representatives of AFD, the consultants and the contractors were also present in the contract signing ceremony,

according WAPDA spokesman here Thursday. WAPDA is carrying out rehabilitation and capacity enhancement of Dargai Hydel Power Station with Financial Support of AFD, France. According to the contract, Dargai Hydel Power Station will be rehabilitated in 3 years. On completion of the rehabilitation project, Dargai Hydel Power Station will generate 22 MW of green and clean hydel electricity. It will provide 130 million units of low cost hydel electricity to the National Grid annually. Dargai Hydel Power Station, located in Malakand, was constructed in 1952. After serving 72 years, it requires rehabilitation to continue its operation.

## PTI, Dar meeting on standing bodies ends without a resolution

ISLAMABAD (INP): A crucial meeting between PTI and Leader of the House Ishaq Dar regarding the division of standing committees concluded without a resolution. The PTI delegation, including Shibli Faraz and parliamentary leader Barrister Ali Zafar, convened with Dar in the Senate, aiming to finalize committee assignments. Despite discussions, both parties failed to reach an agreement on committee distribution. However, they have scheduled another meeting for today to continue negotiations. Senator Ali Zafar expressed optimism, stating, "Standing committees should adhere to procedural rules, and we anticipate our proposals will be considered."

## PM gives green light for Asaan Karobar Act enactment

Directs federal ministries, dept heads to utilize Task Management System

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday approved the initiation of legislation for Asaan Karobar Act saying that promotion of the business and investment friendly environment was the government's top priority. Chairing a meeting on ease of doing business, the prime minister directed the relevant authorities to establish a one-window operation to simplify documentary procedures for the businesses and traders. He also directed to seek assistance from the Chinese experts to establish an experimental facility service center modeled after the Shenzhen One-Stop Shop. As regards ease of doing business and other various initiatives, it was informed that an electronic registry would be established for business registration, licenses, certificates and other documents. It was further told that an online one-window Pakistan Business Portal system would be introduced

through which services of all the relevant departments could be accessed. It was apprised that a strategy was being evolved for the establishment of Islamabad Business Facilitation Center. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Division Ahad Khan Cheema, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Industry and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Ali Pervaiz Malik, Coordinator to the PM Rana Ehsaan Afzal, chief secretaries of all the four provinces and other relevant high officials. Meanwhile Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Thursday instructed federal secretaries and heads of departments to personally utilize the Task Management System. He issued these instructions while chairing a meeting to assess the implementation progress of directives requiring federal

ministries and departments to use the Task Management System. The Task Management System is a modern software of international standards used to monitor instructions issued by the prime minister to federal ministries, and progress in this regard. The prime minister also decided to conduct daily review for implementing the task management system. He said that continuous monitoring of progress in all projects was the initial step towards their timely completion. During the briefing, it was told that a mobile application for the task management system had already been developed. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Petroleum Dr. Musaddik Masood Malik, Minister of State for IT, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, and senior officials from relevant institutions.

## UN Resident Coordinator calls on Planning Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Newly designated United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan Mohamed Yahya on Thursday called on Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal and discussed matters relating to mutual interest. Emphasizing the strong and enduring relationship between Pakistan and the United Nations, the minister said Pakistan has a robust bond with UN agencies and the United Nations has always stood by us during challenging times, such as climate disasters. He also appreciated the UN's significant efforts in assisting Pakistan during the 2022 floods and highlighted that, in response, the Ministry of Planning, in collaboration with

policymakers, developed the 4RF framework to enhance the country's resilience against any catastrophic situations. Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the significance of the newly established Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Secretariat, which will become operational from 1st of July 2024. "Our focus now needs to be on engaging policymakers to achieve our SDG targets and involving media professionals to spotlight critical issues related to the SDGs," he stated. Reflecting on Pakistan's commitment to the SDGs, he maintained that Pakistan was among the first few countries to have adopted SDGs agenda in National Assembly in 2016 as our national agenda.



ISLAMABAD: Mohamed Yahya the United Nations Resident newly designated Coordinator in Pakistan paid a courtesy call on Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal in his office.

## Pakistan urges UN to address specific cases of missing persons in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan has urged the United Nations to address specific cases of missing persons in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Speaking at an Arrria Formula meeting at the UN headquarters in New York, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Ambassador Usman Jadoon said the cases of missing persons in IIOJK

have led to the tragic phenomenon of half widows, referring to Kashmiri women who live in uncertainty about the fate of their husbands, sons, and brothers. He said Pakistan believes that the most effective response to the issue of missing persons in armed conflict is the strict application of international law and a process of accountability.



QUETTA: Balochistan Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development, Bakht Muhammad Kakar cuts ribbon during inauguration ceremony make-shift sacrificial animals market established for the upcoming festival Eid-ul-Azha, in Quetta.

## Governor says Elected representatives ought to come up to expectations of respective constituencies

**Independent Report**  
 QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has stated that it is responsibility of the elected representatives to come up to the expectations of people of their respective election constituencies. The Governor was speaking to a delegation comprising the representatives of Quetta city Halqa PB-42, who called on him under the leadership of MPA Zarak Khan Mandokhail here at the

Governor House on Thursday. The Governor said that the manner people elected them as their representatives in elections reposing confidence on them, similarly, they should serve them and meet their expectations. He said that the dignity of leadership is based on the public service. He stressed that it is responsibility of the elected public representatives to perform their duties honestly.

## Tahir lauds role of EU for providing IT equipment to Balochistan Assembly

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Balochistan Assembly Mr. Tahir Shah Kakar on Thursday said that the European Union (EU) was providing Information Technology (IT) equipment under considering the needs of the Balochistan Assembly was commendable. He expressed these views while addressing at ceremony held in the Balochistan Assembly regarding the supply of IT equipment and computers etc to the Balochistan Assembly by the European Union. Addressing the ceremony, Secretary Balochistan Assembly Tahir Shah Kakar thanked the European Union for providing IT equipment and this initiative would prove a milestone in the partnership between Pakistan and the European Union. "Apart from this, the provision of the equipment will speed up the legislative process in the Balochistan Assembly and

the performance of parliamentary duties will also be effective," he said. He said the initiative would be a first step towards fulfilling the EU's broad commitment and building the foundation for better digital information and better democratic traditions in Pakistan. "In particular, the European Union will be effective in improving parliamentary performance in Pakistan, we are proud of the European Union that Balochistan is playing an important role and key role in the functioning and duties of the Provincial Assembly and in guiding us," he said. He said that he hoped that the EU would take all possible steps to improve the Balochistan Provincial Assembly. Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation of the European Union, while expressing his views at the event, said that through the four-year program.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti addressing launching ceremony of "Team European Technical and Vocation Education Training Support Program. Ambassador European Union Dr. Riina Koinka, Consul General of Germany Dr. Ruediger Lotz, Chairperson NAVTTC Gulmina Bilal and other sitting on stage

## GoB signs MoU with Roche Pakistan for provision of free of cost medicines

**Independent Report**  
 QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for provision of free medicines to the patients suffering from fatal diseases in the province. The MoU was signed in presence of the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and high ups of the Roche Pakistan at the Chief Minister secretariat on Thursday. The Secretary Health, Mujeebur Rehman Qambrani and Managing Director of Roche Pakistan, Hafsa Shamsie signed the MoU. Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director Roche Pakistan said that

the vision of provincial government regarding healthcare is appreciable. She termed the MoU for provision of medicines to the poor people as historic. The poor people would directly benefit from the initiative, she added. The Secretary Health said that the costly medicines would be purchased under cost sharing as per the agreement. The Roche Pakistan would pay the 56 percent cost while the provincial government would pay the remaining 44 percent. However, the medicines would be provided to the patients suffering from cancer and other fatal diseases free of cost, he added.



QUETTA: Country Head of UNFPA in Pakistan Dr. Luay Shabaneh meeting with Provincial Advisor for Women Development Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi

## Bakht Kakar terms central budget as people-friendly

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Minister for Livestock and Dairy Farms Bakht Kakar on Thursday termed the federal government's budget as people-friendly and balanced. Talking to APP, he said that government employees lauded the federal budget announcement of 25 percent increase in salaries, despite the difficult economic conditions. The federal government has tried to provide

relief to every class, he added. The provincial minister said that despite the IMF's direction, the federal government presented a balanced budget, which is a good practice, adding that a huge amount was being spent on pension support. The government would bring reforms in this regard, he said. The government is privatizing the sectors that was not producing results and generating income.

## WDDD to extend full coop. to achieve SDGs of UNFPA in various sectors: Rubaba

**Independent Report**  
 QUETTA: The Advisor to Chief Minister for Women Development Department, Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi has made complete assurance to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in achieving its sustainable development goals (SDGs) in different sectors including women health and balance in population and resources in the province. The Advisor for

Women Development was speaking to the Head of UNFPA, Dr. Luay Shabaneh who called on him here on Thursday. The UNFPA Head briefed the Advisor about overall functioning and projects being executed by the Fund in different sectors in Balochistan. Also present in the meeting were Provincial Head of UNFPA Balochistan, Dr. Sarmad Saeed and Provincial Coordinator of MNCH Programme, Dr. Gul Sabin Ghazrezaei. During the course of meeting, there was discussion on different matters of mutual interest including healthcare of women and their participation in decision making. Dr. Rubaba Buledi on the occasion assured full cooperation on behalf of her department for implementation on the programmes of UNFPA.



QUETTA: Provincial Education Minister Raheel Hameed Khan Durrani in a group photo with participants who completed training under BACT

## ECP challenges LHC decision about constitution of election tribunals

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has challenged in Supreme Court (SC) decision of Lahore High Court (LHC) about constitution of election tribunals. The ECP has requested the apex court to suspend LHC decision forthwith.

ECP filed appeal in SC against the decision of Justice Shahid Karim of LHC on Thursday besides requesting the SC to suspend the LHC decision. ECP has taken plea in the petition that LHC decision is against the law. It is the power of ECP to constitute election tribunals.

High court cannot exercise powers of ECP. The appeal be fixed for hearing today (Friday). LHC had ordered to constitute 8 election tribunals. In the light of LHC decision chief justice Shahzad Malik had issued orders for constitution 8 election tribunals.

## Khetran terms federal budget people friendly

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Minister for Public Health Engineer (PHE) Sardar Abdul Rahman Khetran on Thursday said that the federal government has presented the budget of 24-25 as people-friendly and the fruits would be available to the public very soon. He said that the Balochistan government also presented a people-friendly budget under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti. In his statement, the provincial minister has paid tribute to Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif and his team

in difficult financial situations. He said that the journey of sustainable development was beginning and the country was coming out of the state of economic crisis day by day. He said that the budget was exactly in line with the aspirations of the people saying that in the federal budget, efforts had been made to provide maximum relief to the people. The country's conditions will improve further by the grace of Allah, inflation is being decreased and a people-friendly budget will also be presented in Balochistan, he stated.



QUETTA: Former Chief Minister Balochistan and President National Party Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch meeting with Chief Executive Officer QESCO Engr. Shafqat Ali

## APNEC lauds restoration of health insurance scheme for journalists

ISLAMABAD (INP): All Pakistan Newspapers and Electronic Media Employees Confederation (APNEC) has welcomed the restoration of health insurance scheme for journalists, as announced by the government in the budget year 2024-25. APNEC Chairman Muhammad Siddique Anzar in a statement expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, saying the step would benefit thousands of journalists and media workers. Anzar said the decision would establish a cordial relationship between journalists and the government and would help discourage the perpetrators of carrying out malicious propaganda against the country and the nation. He stressed the need for allocating more funds for journalists and media workers in order to support them in fulfillment of their professional duties.