

# Independent

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## NEC approves 13th 5-year National Development Plan, economic growth target for 2024-25

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Economic Council on Monday approved in principle the 13th five-year National Development Plan along with the annual economic growth targets for the financial year 2024-25 and macroeconomic framework for annual planning.

The NEC meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was informed that the key objectives of the plan included development of every part of the country, especially the less developed areas; increase in exports; promotion of the small and medium industry; social protection and poverty alleviation; increase in the capacity building of the work force; and a framework to protect from the impacts of climate change.

The NEC directed the Planning Ministry to ensure the positive role of the provinces in the national economy and to present a comprehensive framework to increase the exports.

The ministry was also directed to include the provinces in the consultation process to achieve the overall economic growth target of the country.

The prime minister emphasized that the government would ensure the best utilization of the existing resource for revival of the economy and prosperity of the people.

He further said that in all important decisions regarding the economy, the Federation would ensure consultation with the provinces and other stakeholders so that as a result of

the collective vision for the development of the country, such decisions were made that were positive and involved the consent of all.

"The National Economic Council is the biggest forum for important decisions regarding the country's economy, which will be used for important decisions for the recovery of the economy," he added.

The prime minister also directed the National Economic Council to set up a committee which in consultation with the provinces and other stakeholders, should formulate the proposals to not only make the Council active but also to harmonize it with the modern requirements.

The meeting was informed about the performance and the annual development projects for the year 2023-24 and proposals for the upcoming fiscal year 2024-25.

It was told in the meeting that the growth rate target for the upcoming fiscal year had been increased significantly.

The prime minister on the occasion said that as the agriculture sector was the backbone of the country's economy, therefore consultation with the provinces for its development was very important.

He directed to ensure inclusion of the provinces' proposals regarding agriculture and other sectors in the plan. The Council was also informed about the national goals for the recovery of the economy and the measures to achieve them.

The meeting was told that measures such as pro-

duction of export products, innovation of agriculture sector, artificial intelligence and information technology sector in line with international standards, sustainable and renewable energy, effective use of water resources, development of youth and women, effective and speedy implementation of the second phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would ensure development of the country's economy in next five years.

The review of the development budget 2023-24 and proposed development budget 2024-25 was also presented in the meeting.

It was told that in the upcoming development budget, priority would be given to the projects under CPEC, those of foreign investment and the ones close to completion.

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Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the Chief Minister of all four provinces prior to the meeting of National Economic Council in Islamabad.

## Debt of soldiers, citizens to be repaid by relentlessly eliminating terrorism: PM

Attends Namaz-e-Janaza of Shaheed Captain Faraz Ilyas

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday attended Namaz-e-Janaza of Shaheed Captain Faraz Ilyas in Kasur who was martyred in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in District Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The funeral prayer was attended by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, IG Police Punjab and a number of senior military officers, civil authorities and residents.

The prime minister also met with the parents of shaheed captain and expressed condolences.

He announced to transform the native village of martyred officer as model village and renamed it as "Faraz Ilyas Shaheed".

He told the parents that the sacrifice of their son would not go in vain and prayed for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

Under the Quranic teachings, a shaheed had an elevated place in Jannah, he said, adding that a large number of Jawans of armed forces had laid down their lives for the motherland.

The prime minister said that the nation was proud of its brave sons and the coward terrorists could not succeed in shaking their strong resolve.

Separately, on X account, the prime minister said that he was deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Pak Army personnel including a captain in a targeted attack in District Lakki Marwat.

"The sacrifices of our brave soldiers and citizens is a debt on us that we must repay by relentlessly eliminating terrorism from our nation. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families," he further posted.

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## President directs payment of compensation to 1500 affectees of Diamer-Bhasha Dam

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday directed the authorities concerned to ensure the payment of compensation worth Rs 4.7 million each to 1500 affectees of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

The president said this in separate meetings with Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam and Energy Minister Dr Musaddik Malik, according to a President House press release.

Highlighting the necessity of establishment of a medical college and hospital in GB, he instructed the relevant departments to take measures on priority for the purpose.

Besides, he also directed for extending the scope of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) for the people of GB to provide them healthcare facilities.

A few days ago, the GB governor and the Members of GB Council had apprised the president of the issues faced by the GB people. The president had also assured them for the measures to help resolve the problems.



KASUR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif participates in the burial of Shaheed Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas who was martyred in Lakki Marwat.

## Salik attends symposium on Saudi Arabia's Hajj arrangements

MAKKAH AL MUKARRAMAH (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Monday attended a daylong annual symposium organized by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to share its elaborate Hajj arrangements for serving the guests of Allah Almighty in the holy land.

The minister was accompanied by Director General (Hajj) Abdul Wahab Soomro, Director (Hajj) and other senior officers of the Pakistan Hajj Mission and the ministry.

The 48th Grand Hajj Symposium, titled "No Hajj without permission," was an initiative of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and was attended by ministers and religious scholars from various countries.

The symposium is a primary platform for intellectual leadership and knowledge exchange, fostering deeper understanding, appreciation, and comprehension of the spiritual, cultural, and social dimensions of the Hajj rituals.

Speakers highlighted the Kingdom's achievements in serving pilgrims, showcasing pioneering projects and developments in the two Holy Mosques.

They emphasized the cultural and civilizational role the Kingdom undertook to serve Hajj pilgrims, consolidating the principle of peaceful intellectual dialogue on issues concerning the Hajj season.

The symposium aimed to establish unified principles of collective work for the Islamic world in responding to suspicions about faith, nation, and culture.

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## Pakistan's enemies perturbed over its rapid progress under PM: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting and National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Monday said Pakistan's fast-track progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had stunned its enemies in contrast with their dreams of its downfall economically.

The disgruntled elements were fully perturbed as the prime minister had charted the country on path of progress and development, he said while addressing a press conference.

The minister said a so-called leader while being at the helm of affairs in 2018

had adversely affected Pakistan's relations with the brotherly countries thus causing serious problems on the diplomatic front.

On the other hand, the government led by PM Shehbaz Sharif had not only mended relations with the brotherly states, be-

sides restoring the country's prestige in the global community, he added.

Tarar said the prime minister's historic visit to China was "highly successful", which had been marked by an unprecedented level of enthusiasm and mutual cooperation.

A multitude of issues, he said, were addressed during the visit, fostering the dawn of a new era in the bilateral relations of two countries which had been enjoying exemplary bonds for decades.

Their unparalleled friendship stood steadfast against all odds over the years, he added.

## Govt set to present FY2024-25 budget tomorrow

ISLAMABAD (APP): Amid challenges both at internal and external levels, the incumbent government is all set to present its first budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 in the Parliament on June 12 (Wednesday).

The budget will be presented by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb.

The budget had been formulated while considering the existing challenges being faced by economy at domestic and international fronts. Hence, mitigating the people's sufferings, transforming the agriculture sector, promoting information technology (IT), and boosting exports would be the main focus of the document, sources said.

## Govt implementing measures to control iron smuggling on border areas: Ali Pervaiz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Economic Affairs Ali Pervaiz on Monday informed the National Assembly that the government is implementing measures to control iron smuggling at Taftan border area. During the question hour in the House, the minister said that all out resources would be utilized to protect the production of the country's local industries including the iron industry.

The minister said that monitoring on both sides of the Iran-Pakistan border has been tightened to prevent iron smuggling on bordering areas.

Ali Pervaiz said that the only way to escape the

clutches of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program is through reforms, quoting the examples from countries like Vietnam, Indonesia and India.

To another question, he said that appeals involving amounts over Rs 20 million would be decided by appellate tribunals instead of the Commissioner of Income Tax, adding that artificial intelligence and other methods are being used in the selection of audits.

Ali Pervaiz said that minimum wage should be reviewed considering the current inflationary period, adding that he would convene members' views on revising the minimum wage in the upcoming budget.

## No water shortage, provinces given 100% share: Minister told NA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Water Resources Musadik Malik informed the National Assembly on Monday that there is currently no water shortage in the country, and all provinces are receiving their full water share as per the agreed accord in the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) meeting.

Responding to a calling attention notice regarding a 29 percent water shortage observed in Sindh province during the early Kharif season and the diversion of flow into the Link Canal, he said that the IRSA meeting on May 13 decided that water would be provided to provinces according to their shares.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Austria, Mr Muhammad Kamran Akhtar, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## PM invites AKDN to invest more in Pak tourism sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday invited the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) to increase its investment in Pakistan's tourism sector.

He extended the invitation in a meeting with Chairperson Executive Committee of Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development Prince Rahim Aha Khan, who called on him along with a five-member delegation.

The prime minister also congratulated Prince Rahim Aha Khan on receiving the Nishan-e-Pakistan Award from the Government of Pakistan.

He expressed gratitude to Prince Rahim Aha Khan for establishing various social welfare projects in less developed and remote areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.

He said setting up of various welfare projects in Pakistan's education, health, agriculture, tourism, IT and other sectors was commendable. The establishment of a software technology park and solar power plants organized by the Aga Khan Development Network in Hunza were also highly commendable, the prime minister said.

He also expressed his appreciation for the establishment of the microfinance banking center of Habib Bank Limited in Gilgit under the auspices of Aga Khan Development Network.

## PM Shehbaz greets Modi on swearing in as Indian PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday felicitated Narendra Modi as he took the oath of the office of the Prime Minister of India.

"Congratulations to Narendra Modi on taking oath as the Prime Minister of India," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline.

Modi was sworn in as Indian PM on Sunday for a third term after the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance won the general election with 293 seats - a much lower margin than predicted, contrary to the 234 seats won by the opposition.

## Naqvi hints at 'major surgery' in team after loss to India in T20 World Cup 2024

NEW YORK (INP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has hinted at a 'major surgery' in the team after a poor performance against India in the T20 World Cup 2024.

Addressing a press conference in New York, after the Green Shirts' defeat, Mohsin Naqvi said the defeat against India was disappointing in every way. "It seemed that a minor surgery would suffice for the Pakistan cricket team, but after the extremely poor performance, it has become clear that the team needs major surgery," the PCB chairman said. Naqvi said that he was well aware of what was happening within the team and the reasons for the defeat. The PCB Chairman mentioned that Pakistani cricket is currently at its lowest performance level. Our biggest challenge is to improve the team's performance.

The nation will soon see a major surgery taking place. We have to prepare the team for the Champions Trophy, and it is time to give opportunities to the talent sitting outside. The PCB chairman said that the goal is to make the Pakistani cricket team one of the best in the world.



ISLAMABAD: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi.

## Chairperson BISP visits Payment Campsites in Sindh to check facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Rubina Khalid made significant visits to the Benazir Income Support Programme payment campsites in Bachal Shah, Sukkur, and Babarloe, Khairpur on Monday.

The purpose of these visits was to personally monitor the payment disbursement process and to inspect the arrangements and facilities provided for women beneficiaries receiving their Kafaalat and Taleemi Wazaif stipends, said a news release.

During her visit, Rubina Khalid interacted with the women beneficiaries, listened to their concerns, and personally guided the needy and elderly women in receiving their cash amounts. Recognizing the need for efficiency, she directed the officials to increase the numbers of Point of Sale (POS) agents at the campsites to reduce the waiting time for the beneficiaries.

Following her inspections, Chairperson Rubina Khalid addressed the media, emphasizing the commitment to transparency in the disbursement process as directed by President Asif Ali Zardari.

"We have established these payment campsites to ensure transparency in the mechanism of payment disbursement," she stated.



MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH: Saudi officials welcome the Hajj pilgrims from different countries on their arrival.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Approaching budget**

The constitution of the National Economic Council to review and approve the macroeconomic budgetary framework, as well as proposed federal and provincial development spending plans for 2024-25, gives hope that the announcement of next year's budget will not be delayed beyond June 12. Considering that the Annual Plan Coordination Committee had firmed up its macro targets for FY25 at the beginning of this month, the delay in the announcement has been surprising, if not perplexing. Apparently, it was done to facilitate Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif undertake his China visit, which had many guessing about its purpose just ahead of the budget presentation. Rumour has it that the visit was undertaken in connection with IMF-dictated budget targets and programme goals concerning Chinese debt and power purchase agreements with Chinese companies.

That the government is making its budget in exceptionally challenging conditions is an understatement. The present macroeconomic environment is probably the most demanding any government has faced in years — despite the newfound economic stability under the IMF's short-term SBA facility. Macroeconomic conditions remain vulnerable to the slightest shock. Politically, too, the situation is tough. On the one hand, a court decision has, at least for now, deprived the fledgling government of an absolute majority in parliament. On the other, it must find a balance between stringent IMF demands and the public's expectations of relief. Caught between a rock and a hard place, the finance managers have repeatedly reassured the people that the burden of 'adjustments' to be made in the budget under an agreement with the IMF would fall on the affluent. Yet few have faith in those commitments, given the stern IMF conditions that would require drastic direct and indirect taxation and withdrawal of subsidies in the next budget, and a significant increase in energy prices at the beginning of FY25 to qualify for a new bailout.

In this context, the government's budget priorities are clear: economic stabilisation by containing the current account deficit in the balance-of-payments, and reduction in the budget deficit and borrowing requirements through primary budget surplus. Stabilisation is crucial for Pakistan to make its external debt payments on time, bring up its dwindling foreign exchange reserves to a safe level, and achieve debt sustainability by narrowing the gap between its income and spending by mobilising additional tax revenue and cutting public expenditure. It goes without saying that these goals require extensive policy reforms. Both the prime minister and finance minister have time and again expressed their commitment to carrying out the required structural reforms under the new IMF programme. The budget for the next year will be their first test. Many are sceptical of them translating their words into well-defined actions in the budget. Will they prove their doubters wrong?

**In protest mode**

Huma Yusuf

In a year of elections, some signs of democratic revival were inevitable. These have come in the electoral outcomes in India, Mexico and South Africa, where leaders have been held accountable at the ballot box. You can almost hear those who believe in due process breathing a collective sigh of relief after years of authoritarian creep. But what impact will these democratic stirrings have on public protest, and why does it matter?

In recent months alone, Pakistan has seen protests against inflation, food prices, border policies that hamper local trade, energy prices, alleged poll rigging, censorship, disappearances, etc. We are not alone. Indeed, we are living through a new age of protest.

A 2021 report on World Protests from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung think tank and Initiative for Policy Dialogue found that the number of protests worldwide had tripled between 2006 and 2020. The research found that 54 per cent of the protests recorded were triggered in response to "perceived failure of political systems or representation", while 28pc included demands for "real democracy".

The year 2022 saw even more protests — 11,000 across 145 countries — largely against high costs of living. In 2023, protests erupted in 83 countries, on proliferating matters as wide ranging as the Israel-Palestine war, cost of living crisis, climate justice, assaults on democracy, women's rights and government service provision.

The intersectionality of protests is also increasing. Take, for example, the global protests against Israel's atrocities in Gaza.

Climate change activists aligned with the pro-Palestine protest movement early on, arguing that climate justice has to be underpinned by basic human rights and security and freedom from occupation.

Climate activists have been pointing out the immense climate toll of the war: greenhouse gas emissions from war activities, plus the significant emissions expected from future reconstruction activities. They have also accused Israel of carrying out ecocide, for example, by razing olive trees that have stood on the land for centuries. Given the West's current focus on tackling climate change, the disregard for these issues in Palestine is highlighted as further proof of double standards, an argument that resonates with the core messaging of pro-Palestine protests.

More powerfully, the two movements have identified that many financial institutions or corporates that fund or facilitate the fossil fuels sector are the same that facilitate the Israeli defence sector or Israeli companies that operate in or profit from settled areas. By joining forces, the groups have been able to share tactics and intensify pressure on economic institutions.

Similarly, global women's rights and feminist movements have aligned with pro-Palestine protesters given the excessive impact of the conflict on women and children, who account for at least half the lives lost in Gaza since October. Beyond the death toll, women have also been subject to sexual violence, inadequate healthcare, miscarriages and lack of nutrition. Allyship with Gazan women is becoming a feminist imperative.

Will this epic year of elections reduce some of this protest activity or in-

tensify it? Will there be a coalescing of demands or further diversification? The growing intersectionality of protesters has been a fascinating development, forcing disparate groups to engage with each other and find common ground, a refreshing development in polarised times.

But in the context of vibrant democracies, multifaceted protests are less effective in holding democratic governments to account or effecting policy change. As I recently wrote in relation to pro-Palestine protests on US campuses, the most effective protests are the ones with local, relevant and tailored demands.

The activist community must consider how the gradually shifting political landscape will affect protest movements, because the ultimate goal must be to keep the spirit of protest and accountability alive. And as much as we live in an age of protest, we also live in an age of crackdowns, and the threat from authoritarianism and censorship continues to loom large, including in 'democratic' contexts.

For lasting, positive change, protest activity is essential. As political scientist Erica Chenoweth has pointed out, civil disobedience is the most effective way of changing political trajectories, with protests twice as likely to achieve their goals than violent means or any form of conflict. Chenoweth also found that it takes around 3.5pc of a population actively participating in protests to effect meaningful political change. In all scenarios, that means we should remain ready to take to the streets (literally or metaphorically), and remain open, once we're there, to talk to each other rather than across each other. — Courtesy Dawn

**Unlocking potential**

Neda Mulji

Not even 10 per cent of the 531 companies listed on the PSX offer formal training to their employees. These companies have a collective annual turnover of over Rs8 trillion. It wouldn't take much to calculate the impact on productivity if they were to invest in their employees' learning and development opportunities. Learning and development (L&D) helps employees identify their strengths, unlocks thinking potential, and opens lines of communication.

Employees can hugely benefit from simply being heard as they sit for conversations with a workplace coach or mentor. Typical questions that a workplace coach may ask are: what skills can help you do your job better? How can you develop these skills, and what are your priorities for career growth? Ongoing reflection with a mentor or coach not only motivates but can also help align the employee with the company's goals and strategy, as well as drive individual career growth.

Most employees strive for significance — to be seen and valued for their work. An employer's motivation to value employees comes from what they can bring to the table in terms of teamwork, capability, efficiency and productivity. Often, employees complain about churning the same wheel, but lots can change if they take action to drive innovation within their teams.

A McKinsey report on successful L&D strategy by Nick van Dam points out key elements of employee development that are beneficial to companies. Besides building individual capabilities and retaining talent, companies create their own 'brand ambassadors'. This results in a

value-based culture where employees embody the company's reputation and competitive advantage. Brand ambassadors are not just driven by data analytics on productivity, but also the perceived significance of their work, loyalty to the company and ownership of their role.

To be successful, L&D opportunities need to incorporate programmes that are sustainable. From in-person, on the job training and collaboration with colleagues to coaching and mentoring, these programmes can be delivered online. Online training is often viewed with suspicion, as it has been historically considered inferior to in-person interaction. However, studies have shown that online training is a 'safer' place giving opportunities for self-expression and individual work to employees who may not be comfortable speaking in public or in a face-to-face set-up.

Those with full schedules during the day are more receptive to online sessions that they can attend sitting at their desk or at home, rather than clearing their calendar for a physical meet-up. Online learning is often also easier to monitor if followed by assessments that gauge learning impact and key takeaways. In fact, online training programmes are all the more necessary in Pakistan to empower professionals to use technology and digital tools with greater ease in this fast-evolving era of learning management systems.

Ninety-one per cent of Fortune 500 companies offer mentoring and coaching programmes. This correlation between investment in employee development and the companies' success is not coincidental. An increasing number of global companies are

looking towards investment in professional development, particularly reskilling and coaching as a way of increasing productivity. Not only does L&D target goals, it also ensures a continuous learning culture so that employees are able to respond to the fast-changing work and external environment.

Development opportunities have come to be recognised as a deciding factor for the 'employer of choice'. The 'millennials' are increasingly choosing companies that can commit to their growth. Most employees choose to stick with a company that caters to their well-being, keeping them engaged in the company's values, goals and teamwork as opposed to reporting on day-to-day tasks.

Investing in employees not just saves the company the costs associated with a high turnover, it also ensures that skills are not misdirected, with employees stuck in roles not suited to their ability. It helps employers make conscious decisions for placement, promotion and professional development. It also ensures that employees stay motivated, learn how to manage themselves and rise up to challenges as a team. The employee engagement that results from these efforts helps safeguard and promote the company's reputation with its customers.

Understandably, many companies avoid the costs of training employees for fear of losing them to competitors, but the price of avoiding training will always be higher. As Henry Ford once said, "The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave is not training them and having them stay." — Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**SBP cuts down policy rate to 20.5% amid easing inflationary pressures**

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday slashed the policy rate by 150 basis points to 20.5 percent owing to subsiding inflationary pressure and ease in inflation expectations amid tight policy stance that was also supported by fiscal consolidation and administrative measures by government.

"The reduced policy rate of 20.5 % will be effective from June 11, 2024," the SBP said in its monetary policy statement issued after the meeting of Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

The MPC found decline in inflation since February broadly in line with expectations and May out turn better than earlier anticipation and assessed that underlying

inflationary pressures were subsiding as reflected by continued moderation in core inflation and ease in inflation expectations of both consumers and businesses in the latest surveys.

The committee viewed some upside risks to the near-term inflation outlook associated with the upcoming budgetary measures and uncertainty regarding future energy price adjustments noting that "the cumulative impact of the earlier monetary tightening is expected to keep inflationary pressures in check."

While reviewing key development, the MPC noted that the real GDP growth remained moderate at 2.4% in FY24 as per provisional data, reduced current account deficit

helped improve the foreign exchange reserves to around \$9 billion despite large debt repayments while the government has also approached the IMF for an Extended Fund Facility Programme, which was likely to unlock financial inflows that would help in further building up of FX buffers.

The committee noted that international oil prices have declined, whereas non-oil commodity prices have continued to inch up.

The committee terming it an appropriate time for reducing the policy rate on basis of recent developments, noted that the real interest rate was still significantly positive which was important to continue guiding inflation to the medium-term target of 5 to 7 %.



ISLAMABAD: The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi calls on the Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain.

**TCP imports 6,572,430 metric tons of wheat from 2020 to 2023: NA Informed**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan informed the National Assembly on Monday that the Trading Corporation of Pakistan Limited (TCP) imported 6,572,430 metric tons of wheat during the period from 2020-21 to 2022-23.

During the question hour in the house, the minister said that the TCP imported wheat based on the instructions of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) and the federal cabinet.

Jamal Kamal clarified

that the TCP did not import any quantity of wheat during the year 2023-24.

He explained that TCP acts as the sole medium for purchasing wheat for food security purposes, while its storage and distribution are managed by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

The minister dispelled any rumors regarding the export of wheat flour, stating that such reports are baseless and no such decision has

been made. He said that it was decided last year that the private sector would be responsible for importing wheat, and TCP would not engage in wheat imports. However, he said that TCP can only import wheat under a mandate given by the government.

Regarding sugar, the minister clarified that decisions related to the import and export of sugar are made by the Sugar Advisory Board, and no decision has been made yet regarding sugar imports.

**Country holds surplus electricity, ready for 24-hour supply: Minister**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari informed the National Assembly on Monday that the country has surplus electricity and we are ready to provide 24-hour power supply to feeders with zero losses.

Speaking at the National Assembly forum, he said, "The system has enough generation and transmission capacity to meet the electricity demand, and we are ready to provide electricity 24-hours to consumers. However, this is not possible without

controlling line losses and power theft."

The minister said that the country cannot afford to increase the circular debt further.

"We don't provide electricity to feeders with high line losses because this adds to the losses in the power sector, which cannot be borne by the country's economy," he added. The minister stressed that unless distribution companies, with the assistance of provincial governments, change their course and control their losses, "load shedding will continue on these high-loss feeders."



SARGODHA: A vendor selling seasonal fruits near Shaheen Chowk.

**KE introduces live App for providing easy access to income tax certificates**

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the fiscal year closes and citizens prepare to file their taxes, K-Electric has introduced a quick and new service for customers to download their tax certificates through the KE Live App in just four simple clicks.

These include sales tax for our industrial or commercial customers, advance income tax for residential accounts, and withholding tax certificate for net metering customers, said a press release issued on Monday.

The initiative is an extension of KE's efforts to digitize its services to bring

in more efficiency and customer-centricity in its processes and leverages technology and innovation to bridge the gap between the customer and the company. Sharing his comment on the features, spokesperson KE stated "We're pleased to expand the portfolio of services on the KE Live App, which reduces the need for customers to physically visit our centers by offering them a digital solution at their fingertips. Customers can also apply for new connections, change of name requests, and get real-time updates on their power supply from any location."

**Women export display centre to be set up at Faisalabad: FWCCI**

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FWCCI) will establish a Women Export Display Centre at Faisalabad in collaboration with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to facilitate 'Access to Market' for women products.

These products, particularly handmade articles, are high in demand in traditional and non-traditional markets abroad, said Mrs. Rubina Amjad, President FWCCI and Chairperson of FPCCI Standing Committee on Think Tank.

She was addressing the participants in a symposium on 'Digital Transformation of Women Businesses in Pakistan', organized by Think Tank Committee in collaboration with the FPCCI here today.

She said that Pakistan's export volume can go further high if we are able to facilitate and fetch best prices for women products, particularly handmade products, in international markets.

She said that as founder and current President of Faisalabad Women Chamber and now Chairperson of FPCCI Think Tank Committee, her main emphasis is that women doing business or start-ups must be facilitated and equipped with digital transformation that offers a pathway to overcome traditional barriers and achieve sustainable growth. By embracing digital tools and strategies, women entrepreneurs should enhance their competitiveness and market base in this planet of more than 200 countries, she added.

**Pak sees 62.3% surge in IT exports; report**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan has witnessed a remarkable 62.3% increase in IT exports in April this year compared to the same period last year, according to a recent report by the BBC.

The surge in IT exports is attributed to the policy reforms and business-friendly policies introduced by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), PTV reported.

The stability of the local currency and the decision to allow freelancers to deposit foreign earnings into local bank accounts have been key factors in this growth, the report read. It further stated that the State Bank of Pakistan's relaxation of the retention limit for IT companies from 35% to 50% has also contributed to the increase.

**Talal Chaudhary says: Centre constitutionally authorized to levy taxes for greater national interest**

FAISALABAD (APP): Central leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Talal Chaudhary said that federal government was constitutionally authorized to levy taxes and nobody could stop it from exercising this right.

Talking to media persons at Jaranwala here, he strongly condemned the statement of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister and said that taxes were the lifeline of a

government and the government was determined to collect and spend taxes for the uplift of the country and welfare of the masses. He termed the statement of the KP Chief Minister irresponsible and unconstitutional and said that a major portion of taxes collected by the federal government is distributed among the provinces to launch their projects from this pooled money.

**Jazz ranks leading cellular mobile operator**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jazz was ranked as the leading cellular mobile operator in Pakistan, topping multiple categories in the Pakistan.

The QoS survey, carried by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) out in 16 cities of Pakistan during the first quarter of 2024, assessed the performance of Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs) in accordance with the Cellular Mobile Network Quality of Service (QoS) Regulations 2021, said a news release issued by the company.



## AJK PM vows to use tax money for people's welfare

MIRPUR-AJK (APP): Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq on Monday pledged to use tax money to improve the lives of the common man.

Speaking at a reception in Dheerkot, the AJK PM said his government's goal is to provide good governance and ensure that tax money would be spent on people's welfare.

The government has made significant progress, turning a 16 billion rupee loss into a 32 billion rupee profit.

A significant portion of 19 billion rupee, had been utilized for road development without any corruption.

The AJK PM emphasized the need to end politics based on caste, class and tribe.

He expressed hope that development works will be expedited soon, stressing the importance of tolerance, wisdom and strong institutions.

The government had collected an amount of 11 crore rupee taxes

annually and the AJK PM warned that failing to fulfill the state responsibilities would be a sheer violation.

He advocated for peaceful resolution of all genuine issues.

He was of the opinion that protest is not the solution of any problem. The AJK PM reiterated his belief in the slogan "Kashmir Banega Pakistan" and urged an end to civil war.

The event was also attended by various government ministers.



**LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Local Government Zeeshan Rafique presides over the special meeting. Punjab Minister for Agriculture Syed Ashiq Kirmani is also present.**

## CM directs expansion of promising Saffron cultivation initiative

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has directed the Agriculture Department to collect detailed data on agricultural lands across the province and prepare for saffron cultivation on suitable lands by the upcoming season.

Yar Muhammad Khan Niazi, the Chief Minister's Focal Person for Digital Media, reported that the pilot saffron planting by the KP Agriculture Department has shown promising results.

With seed and input costs around Rs 3.2 million per acre, the tentative annual return is estimated at about Rs 6.8 million. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 127,950 acres of potential saffron-growing area, capable of producing 255 tons of stigma, which could generate an annual economic return of billions of rupees. The investment in saffron farming in KP will be phased over short (4 years), medium (7 years), and long-term (10 years) periods. Over a decade, this initiative could create

around 3.6 million direct jobs, employing 4 laborers per kanal.

The Chief Minister emphasized the need for the effective utilization of available agricultural land to make it a significant source of income for the provincial government.

He instructed the Agriculture Department to undertake saffron cultivation directly, rather than leasing the lands, while also encouraging farmers to cultivate saffron on suitable lands.



**ABBOTTABAD: Fire fighters extinguishing fire at dairy farm warehouse building during rescue operation after fire broke out incident due to electric short circuit, in Abbottabad**

## Measles under control in Punjab: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare, Khwaja Imran Nazir said on Monday that the measles situation in the province was under control, with a significantly lower number of confirmed cases and fatalities compared to other provinces.

disease, as per the National Institute of Health.

The minister emphasized that every child's life was precious and that the government was taking measures to ensure their safety.

He clarified that a 2-3% death ratio was natural in every disease, and the measles ratio was even lower.

Speaking to a private news channel, he stated that while measles cases in Punjab were fewer than in other provinces, the vaccination campaign was intensified to protect children from infectious diseases. Khwaja Imran said out of over 10,000 suspected cases reported, 2,700 were confirmed, representing a 25% ratio, whereas only 28 deaths were confirmed with the

The Punjab government is utilizing digital monitoring and clustering to combat the disease, with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz focusing her attention on the issue. The minister said clustering analysis had identified Bahawalpur, Jhang, and Chaniot as the most affected areas, while the rest of the districts had routine patients.

## Man kills wife over domestic dispute

PESHAWAR (APP): A man shot dead his wife over domestic dispute in the vicinity of Pahari Pura police station, police said on Monday.

Pahari Pura police said the incident occurred in Gul Abad No-2, Pahari Pura where a man shot dead his 27-year-old wife.

The brother of the deceased woman told police that his sister, Shazia was married to Shah Saud.

He alleged that Shah Saud shot dead Shazia with the consent and help of his brother Shah Khalid.

The police shifted the body to hospital for post-mortem and started investigation after registering a case against both the accused.

## Bus crushes youngster to death

MULTAN (APP): A bus crushed the youngster to death near the Niaz petrol pump on Khanewal Road Multan.

According to Rescue 1122, a youngster named Muhammad Aziz (21) son of Muhammad Sharif, resident of Block W New Mulan, was heading to his destination.

## KP gov't taking measures to enhance educational facilities, females' literacy: Minister

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Provincial Education Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Khan Tarakai on Monday said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has unveiled a series of revolutionary initiatives aimed at increasing female literacy rate and educational facilities for women, particularly in merged areas.

Addressing a briefing session organized by the Merged Districts Education Foundation, he highlighted the urgent need to expand access to education and control

dropout rates, especially among girls.

He emphasized the launch of community-based education centers under the supervision of the Foundation, including the Sabaoon Schools Program and Middle School Program, to swiftly establish schools and address immediate educational needs. During the briefing, Managing Director of the Foundation, Mian Ainullah, informed that the foundation was operating as many as 207 community-based education centers in the province.

## ANF seizes over 262 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country seized over 262 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that 1.2 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of a female passenger going to Bahrain at Islamabad Airport.

1 kg heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Dubai at Karachi Airport while 63.6 kg hashish and 72 kg opium were recovered from two suspects rounded up near Ravi Toll Plaza Lahore.

## Health minister visits Pak Children's Hearth Foundation, reviews facilities

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique on Monday visited the Pakistan Children's Heart Foundation and the hospital under construction in the University of Lahore (UoL) and reviewed the medical facilities there.

Chairman Farhan Ahmed briefed the minister regarding the working details of the Pakistan Children's Heart Foundation.

Chairman University of Lahore Owais Rauf, Medical Superintendent Dr Zahid Parvez, Dr Ali Nasir, Dr Arsal, Professor Uzmi, and others were present. Minister Khawaja

Salman Rafique said that the capacity of cardiology departments in Jinnah Hospital, Mayo Hospital, Ganga Ram Hospital, and hospitals in Wazirabad as well as Faisalabad was being increased. The number of children born with heart disease in Pakistan was unfortunately increasing every year, he said, adding that government cardiology hospitals were trying to increase the number of surgeries. The minister said that Nawaz Sharif was going to build a state-of-the-art cardiology hospital in Sargodha, and in this regard, Pakistan Children's Heart Foundation was with them.



**MUZAFFARABAD: University students protesting at Azadi Chowk for the release of poet Ahmed Farhad.**

## Relief Commissioner Punjab briefed about Monsoon Contingency Plan 2024

LAHORE (APP): Relief Commissioner Punjab Nabil Javed chaired a meeting about Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) measures in the committee room on Monday in which construction and restructuring of the PDMA Punjab Complex was discussed. Director General PDMA Irfan Ali Kathia, Secretary Board of Revenue Shafiqullah Mushtaq and other officers attended the meeting.

The DG briefed Relief Commissioner Nabil Javed about PDMA's

initiatives and briefed about the Monsoon Contingency Plan 2024. DG PDMA Irfan Ali Kathia said that the probability of monsoon rains this year was higher than before, adding that preparations had been completed in anticipation of monsoon rains and possible floods. He said that warehouses of PDMA would be established in Rawalpindi, Bahawalpur, Sargodha, Rajanpur, and Jhang. Nabil Javed issued instructions to remove encroachments from rivers and canals.

## International News

### UN Security Council set to vote on Gaza ceasefire deal today after US call

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The United States announced on Sunday it has requested a UN Security Council vote on its draft resolution backing a plan for an "immediate ceasefire with the release of hostages" between Israel and Hamas.

Diplomatic sources said the vote is planned for Monday, but has not yet been confirmed by South Korea, which holds the Security Council presidency for the month of June.

"Today, the United States called for the Security Council to move towards a vote... supporting the proposal on the table," said Nate Evans, spokesman for the US delegation, without specifying a vote date.

"Council members should not let this opportunity pass by and must speak with one voice in

support of this deal," Evans said. The United States, a staunch ally of Israel, has been widely criticized for having blocked several UN draft resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

US President Joe Biden on May 31 launched a new push for a ceasefire and hostage release deal, separate from the United Nations.

Under the proposal, Israel would withdraw from Gaza population centers and Hamas would free hostages. The ceasefire would last an initial six weeks, with it extended as negotiators seek a permanent end to hostilities.

The United States is placing primary responsibility for accepting the proposal on Hamas, specifically calling on the Palestinian militant group to accept the document in the latest version

of the draft text.

That version, which was distributed to member states on Sunday and was seen by AFP, "welcomes" the new ceasefire proposal while stating, unlike in previous versions, that Israel has already accepted.

The draft resolution "calls upon Hamas to also accept it, and urges both parties to fully implement its terms without delay and without condition."

In response to requests from several member states, the latest text clearly lays out the proposal.

This includes a first phase with an "immediate, full, and complete ceasefire," release of hostages taken by Hamas, and "exchange of Palestinian prisoners" plus "withdrawal of Israeli forces from the populated areas in Gaza."



**U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives at Cairo airport, Egypt.**

### Italy's PM Meloni comes out on top in EU vote, strengthening her hand

**Monitoring Desk**  
ROME: Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's arch-conservative Brothers of Italy group won the most votes in the European parliamentary election over the weekend, results showed, boosting her standing both at home and abroad. With 96% of the ballots counted, Brothers of Italy won 28.8% of the vote, more than four times what it took in the last EU election in 2019 and exceeding the 26% it secured in the 2022 national

ballot, when it rose to power. "I am proud that Italy will present itself to the G7, to Europe with the strongest government of all. This is something that has not happened in the past but is happening today, it is a satisfaction and also a great responsibility," Meloni said early on Monday from the party's headquarters. The opposition centre-left Democratic Party came in second with 24%, while another opposition group, the 5-Star Movement,

### US, Poland launching group to help Ukraine counter Kremlin disinformation

**Monitoring Desk**  
WARSAW: The United States announced Monday that it is setting up an operation in the Polish capital to help neighboring Ukraine counter Russian disinformation.

The U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Center, which works to highlight disinformation by what it considers hostile states, said in a statement that the U.S. and Poland have jointly launched a Ukraine Communications Group.

### Macron calls snap legislative elections

**Monitoring Desk**  
PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday announced he was dissolving parliament and called snap legislative elections after the far-right trounced his centrist alliance in EU polls.

The first round of elections for the lower house National Assembly will take place on June 30, with the second round on July 7. Macron announced in an address to the nation.

The outcome of the EU elections, he acknowledged, is "not a good result

for parties who defend Europe." Macron noted that, including the top scoring National Rally (RN), far-right parties in France managed to take almost 40 per cent of the vote in the EU elections in France. "Far right parties... are progressing everywhere in the continent. It is a situation in which I cannot resign myself," he said.

"I decided to give you the choice... Therefore I will dissolve the National Assembly tonight.

"This decision is serious and heavy but it is an act of confidence.

### Mexico ruling party wins lower house super-majority but falls short in Senate

**Monitoring Desk**  
MEXICO CITY: Mexico's ruling Morena party and its allies have won a super-majority in the lower house of Congress but not the Senate, the party's president said on Sunday, falling just short of the two-thirds majority needed in both houses to change the constitution. Preliminary results from the June 2 vote.

### US, Saudi Arabia close to finalising security treaty, says WSJ

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The Biden administration is close to finalising a treaty with Saudi Arabia that would commit the US to help defend the Gulf nation as part of a deal aimed at encouraging diplomatic ties between Riyadh and Israel, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday, citing US and Saudi officials.

The possible deal, widely telegraphed by US and other officials for weeks, is part of a wider package that would include a US-Saudi civil nuclear pact, steps toward the establishment of a Palestinian state and an end to the Israeli aggression in Gaza, where months of ceasefire efforts have failed to bring peace.

Approval of the

treaty, which the WSJ said would be known as the Strategic Alliance Agreement, would require a two-thirds majority vote in the US Senate, a threshold that would be difficult to achieve unless the treaty were tied to Israeli-Saudi normalisation.

The draft treaty is modelled loosely on Washington's mutual security pact with Japan, the newspaper cited US and Saudi officials as saying.

In exchange for the US commitment to help defend Saudi Arabia if it were attacked, the draft treaty would grant Washington access to Saudi territory and airspace to protect US interests and regional partners, the newspaper reported.

### International investors grab 'majority' of Aramco shares

**Monitoring Desk**  
RIYADH: Oil giant Saudi Aramco said on Sunday that international investors had snatched up the bulk of shares sold in its latest offering, which was set to raise \$11.2 billion.

The secondary offering was expected to provide a short-term boost to Saudi Arabia's finances as the Gulf kingdom builds large-scale projects including resorts and stadiums, part of a reform drive to prepare for an eventual post-oil future.

"The majority of the shares constituting the institutional tranche of the Offering was allocated to investors located outside of the Kingdom," the company said in a statement before the Saudi bourse reopened on Sunday.

Aramco ended trading on Sunday at 28.60 Saudi riyals (\$7.63) per share, after opening at 27.95 riyals, giving it a market capitalisation of around \$1.85 trillion.

Sources close to the

situation said that around 58 per cent of shares were allocated to international investors, up from around 23pc for the company's initial public offering in 2019 which was the biggest flotation in history.

The sources said around 70pc of orders outside the local market came from the European Union and the United States, while others came from Japan, Hong Kong and Australia.

Aramco, the mostly state-owned jewel of the Saudi economy, announced on May 30 that it would sell 1.545 billion shares, or approximately 0.64pc of its issued shares, on the Saudi stock exchange.

It was widely seen as a test of foreign investor interest more than halfway through the kingdom's campaign known as Vision 2030, whose ambitions are reflected in so-called gigaprojects such as NEOM, a planned futuristic megacity in the desert.

### Putin set to visit North Korea, Vietnam, Vedomosti reports

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit North Korea and Vietnam in the coming weeks, Russia's Vedomosti newspaper reported on Monday, with an official telling Reuters the Vietnam visit was planned for June 19-20 but has not yet been confirmed. Putin's visit to Pyongyang is being "actively prepared", Russian Ambassador to North Korea Alexander Matsegora confirmed to the newspaper.

The newspaper reported that Putin could visit Vietnam as early as June and most likely immediately after his visit to North Korea. An official in Vietnam told Reuters the dates of the Hanoi visit had been agreed, but the agenda was still under discussion. Energy, military cooperation, settlement of payments and an agreement in the educa-

tion field are among the main issues expected to be discussed, the official said.

Vedomosti quoted Russia's trade representative in Vietnam as saying last month that the most pressing trade issue between the two countries was banking support for settling payments.

Vietnam's foreign ministry did not reply to a request for comment.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited Russia last September for talks with Putin.

He toured Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome space launch centre in Russia's Far East and Putin promised to help North Korea build satellites. The Kremlin has said Russia wants to build a partnership with North Korea "in all areas" but has not confirmed the date of the visit.

### South Africa's Ramaphosa to miss G7, focus on finding partners to govern

**Monitoring Desk**  
JOHANNESBURG: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will not attend this week's Group of Seven (G7) summit in Italy, his spokesperson said on Monday, as his party rushed to find partners to govern the country.

Ramaphosa's African National Congress (ANC) is holding talks with a wide range of other parties, saying it wants to form a national unity government after losing its majority for the first time since the end of apartheid in last month's election. Diplomatic sources had said Ramaphosa was due to take part in the G7 summit from June 13-15 at the invitation of Italy, which holds the rotating presidency of the G7 and wants to broaden the gathering beyond the usual seven industrial democracies.



## KP Governor for revival of DI Khan International airport

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi in a meeting with the secretary Civil Aviation Saif Anjum in Islamabad has emphasised that revival of the Dera Ismail Khan International Airport was crucial not only for DI Khan but also for the adjoining districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Balochistan region to promote trade and investment activities.

A press release issued here on Monday said that the governor told the secretary Civil Aviation that the DI Khan Airport had been a profitable route for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and emphasised that this region holds special importance due to its geographical significance and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor project.

Kundi highlighted the urgent need to commence work on this project to initiate international flights from this area. This would alleviate significant travel difficulties faced by the residents of this region living in the Gulf countries, he said. During the meeting, Deputy Director General Civil Aviation Saif Anjum provided a detailed briefing on the DI Khan International Airport. It is pertinent to mention here that the meeting and briefing came at a time when the KP Government and the Ministry of Aviation were focusing on the construction.



ISLAMABAD: PM's Coordinator on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam presenting a sapling to Uzma Yusuf, Cambridge International's Country Director for Pakistan.

## Muqam says: Govt all set to present people-friendly, development-oriented budget 2024-25

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam Monday assured that the government would provide a people-friendly and development-oriented budget for 2024-25 that would provide relief to the disadvantaged and successfully implement its policies to serve the masses. Talking to a private news channel, he said the scope of public welfare projects would be extended under public-private partnership and unnecessary expenditures further reduced.

He said besides big cities, balanced development of villages is also being ensured so that all facilities should be available to the youth and farmers living in rural areas. He said the comment would provide the leadership of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has better days ahead where the common man will get full benefit from the prudent policies of the present government. The minister also assured that the government would control inflation and the common man would get relief on priority. Replying to a question, he said the next financial year would be the year of economic progress for Pakistan, adding economic conditions were difficult.

## Civil society calls out Indian regime for violating global laws in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): The civil society members in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) have condemned the Indian government's continued violation of international laws and conventions, calling for the restoration of Articles 370 and 35-A and an immediate solution to the Kashmir dispute.

The Indian government's revocation of Kashmir's special status was a flagrant breach of international law and UN resolutions, they said.

The regime is also settling Indian citizens in IIOJK by granting them domicile status, changing the demographic composition of the disputed territory. They deplored that the Modi regime is grabbing Kashmiris' land and properties, violating international norms and denying them their right to self-determination.



ISLAMABAD: A youngster seeks relief from the intense heat by diving and splashing into the cool waters on a scorching day.

## EC accepts plea of 3 MNAs of PML-N, transfers their petitions from IET

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has accepted the pleas of PML-N Members of National Assembly (NA) and shifted their petitions to other Election Tribunals from Islamabad Election Tribunal. The EC announced the reserved judgment on PML-N 3-MNAs from Islamabad petitions seeking shifting their petitions to other tribunals from Election Tribunal Islamabad. The commission had reserved judgment on Friday after hearing the arguments from the respondents. 3 MNAs of PML-N from Islamabad had expressed reservations on tribunal. A 3-member bench of Election Commission presided over by Chief Election Commissioner had heard the petitions.

It is pertinent to mention here that PML-N candidates including Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Raja Khurram Nawaz and Anjum Aqeel had filed petitions in EC seeking change of Election Tribunal. The EC while accepting their petitions issued notices to the respondents for the month of June. The EC had reserved judgment on June 8 after hearing the petitions. The EC while accepting the petitions of PML-N MNAs transferred all cases to other election tribunals.



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi is being briefed about DI Khan Airport at the Ministry of Aviation Islamabad.

## Committee emphasizes implementation for anti-rape act

ISLAMABAD (APP): A special committee on anti-rape on Monday emphasized the need for implementing anti-rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 and collaborative efforts of the institutions in combating sexual violence.

Chairperson of the Special Committee, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq presided over a pivotal meeting to review the Implementation of the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 and discuss the development of the National Sex Offenders Register (SOR), said a press release.

The Special Committee reviewed data from Police, Prosecution, Courts and Home departments all across Pakistan and key actions were identified for improving investigations and prosecutions of sex offences.

The chairperson of the Anti-Rape special committee emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in combating sexual violence, stating, "Ensuring justice for survivors of sexual violence is our top priority. The Special Committee is working closely with Federal and Provincial Agencies in order to improve compliance with Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 to ensure that both resources and processes are in place to support vulnerable victims." The meeting was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Law and Justice, Provincial Law Enforcement Agencies, Civil Society Organisations, NADRA and the National Police Bureau. Their collective participation highlights the integrated approach necessary to tackle the pervasive issue of sexual violence effectively. Key actions were identified for ensuring rigorous investigations and swift trials under the Act, reinforcing the government's resolve to uphold the rights and dignity of survivors.

Primary focus will be placed on improving investigations by maximizing the number of cases referred to designated Anti-Rape Crisis Cell (ARCC) and Special Sexual Offenses Investigation Units (SSOUIs) and improving the timelines for deciding cases to ensure swift justice is delivered to survivors of sex offences.

The periodic review process will also be utilized to track convictions of sex offenders from across Pakistan being added to the Sex Offenders Register, which is a valuable tool for safeguarding communities by assisting in investigation and prosecution of sex offences and deterring potential offenders.

Jawwad Raza Sultan, the focal person and member Special Committee and Section Officer of the Anti Rape Cell at the Ministry of Law and Justice, presented data to the Special Committee on the compliance with the Anti Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021.

The information was gathered from Anti Rape Crisis Cells, Prosecutor Generals, Special Sexual Offenses Investigation Units (SSOUIs), and Special Courts throughout Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, chairs the meeting of the Special Committee to Monitor Implementation of Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021.

## Dangue larvae reports 250 locations in ICT last week

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon chaired a meeting regarding dengue measures in the federal capital, in which officials reported finding dengue larvae at 250 locations across the city last week.

The DC emphasized that controlling the spread of dengue required active participation from residents, said the ICT Administration's Spokesman.

The meeting focused on reviewing ongoing initiatives and campaigns aimed at eradicating the larvae.

During the meeting, the officials briefed the DC that not a single case of dengue was reported in the city last week.

The deputy commissioner stressed the importance of community involvement in keeping homes and surroundings clean to prevent the breeding of dengue-carrying mosquitoes.

The health department also urged all citizens to play their part in this public health effort.

## IGP says: Resolve public issues immediately, purely on merit is foremost priority

ISLAMABAD: According to the details, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) our top priority. Negligence and carelessness in duties will not be tolerated. Any citizen facing any issue related to the police can come to the Khuli Katchery. My office is always open for my citizens, the IGP said.

IG Islamabad further directed the concerned officers to resolve the citizens grievances on merit within the stipulated time frame and report back to the Central Police Office. He instructed all SDPOs and SHOs to adhere to the designated office hours and prioritize resolving citizens' issues. He strictly directed the officers to continue the crackdown against land grabbers and bring them to justice.

## TEVTA to transform six training institutes into Int'l training centers to meet global demands: Chairperson

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Technical Education and Vocation Training Authority Brig. Muhammad Sajid Khokhar Monday said TEVTA had planned to upgrade its over six training institutes with modern infrastructure, skilled oriented International training centers to ensure a brighter future for the country's skilled workforce to meet global market demands.

Talking to PTV news channel, he said that various countries including Korea, Japan and Gulf countries were being shortlist for this program, adding, the persons would be sent to these courses would also be able to learn their languages as well.

The chairman also said the initiative would promote overseas employment in the country and help Pakistan boost its manpower supply, adding, we had

steps were taken as per the vision 2024 which would provide market-oriented education to students, industry-academia linkages were also being focused and in that regard independent sector councils were being set up. He said around 386 institutions were working under TEVTA, adding, to increase the enrollment we had planned to introduced evening classes in all our institutes



Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasar presides over a meeting of the Senate House Committee at Parliament House, Islamabad.

## IHC issues written order for hearing case of missing poet Ahmad Farhad

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued written order for hearing the case in connection with recovery of missing poet Ahmad Farhad.

A 4-page written order has been issued in Urdu by justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani Monday.

It has been said in the decision registrar IHC should invite DGMI, DGIB, DG ISI, incharge CTD and others in next meeting of Criminal Justice Committee so that they could bring their recommendations and submissions under discussion.

All the cases where in the matters of national security are in view be fixed for in-camera hearing.

If it is felt necessary then larger bench should hear them after obtaining in-camera briefing from the chiefs of higher investigation agencies. He should also issue order for not reporting such cases in media.

The court wraps up the petition with directives. Ahmad Farhad is declared an enforced disappeared person unless he returns to his home safe.

Investigating officer of Lohi Bir police station should record the statement of Ahmad Farhad under 164 before magistrate on reaching home.

The court also ordered to club all the cases of missing persons which are pending hearing in IHC and send them to chief justice. Registrar office should send all the cases to chief justice for constitution of larger bench by exercising his administrative powers so that this matter of public interest could be dealt with in better way.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Education, Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, delivers a speech during the launch event of the Foundational Learning Policy 2024 held in the federal capital.

## Three-day Intl summit on Higher Education inaugurated

ISLAMABAD (APP): US Chargé d'Affaires Andrew J Schofer along with Chairman of Higher Education Commission Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed inaugurated the three-day International Summit on Higher Education on Monday.

The USAID-funded summit brings together over 180 Pakistani and American university leaders and faculty to collaborate, exchange knowledge, and build partnerships to improve the quality of higher education and student employability said a news release.

The summit is part of USAID's \$19 million Higher Education System Strengthening Activity that supports 16 Pakistani public universities to improve higher education management, market-relevant instruction, and student support services.

In his opening remarks, Chargé d'Affaires Schofer highlighted the crucial role of higher education institutions in driving Pakistan's economic development.

"Higher education institutions have an essential role to play in Pakistan's development. When universities deliver equitable education, provide youth with employment-ready skills, and lead in applied research and innovation, both individuals and society prosper," he stated.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, appreciated this robust partnership between the University of Utah and Pakistani universities to exchange ideas and share innovations across borders.

## Ministry, Cambridge University to collaborate on climate initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): PM's Coordinator on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam on Monday held a meeting with Cambridge International's Country Director for Pakistan Uzma Yusuf here to discuss collaboration on climate initiatives. It was agreed that the Cambridge University Press and Assessment would collaborate on developing climate curriculum and also advise the Ministry of Climate Change on climate related funds and resources, a news release said.

The PM's Coordinator underscored that climate change education helped people understand and address the impacts of climate crisis. "Empowering the youth with climate knowledge, skills, values and attitude is direly needed to address the climate related issues," she added. Romina Khurshid Alam further said that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement & the Associated Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) called on governments to educate.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers are busy in construction work of Chak Shahzad road during development work in the Federal Capital.

## ICCI-NUTECH join hands to promote industry, academia cooperation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with National University of Technology (NUTECH) will initiate industrial based skill training program, need based scholarship, besides establishing business incubation center to promote entrepreneurship among the youth.

Consensus to this regard was developed during the visit of a delegation led by President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, said a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, Rector NUTECH Lieutenant General @ Moazzam Ejaz said that the University has been ranked among the 100 best institutions of the world, which is the result of the tireless efforts of its faculty and the expertise of the students in the relevant fields.

He said that the university was fully determined to achieve the set goals, adding that convergence of academia-industry signifies a step forward to give boost to Pakistan's innovative landscape to herald a promising future with boundless possibilities.