

Independent

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Vol. XIV No. 138 Reg. mails-B/ID-445 Thursday June 13, 2024, Zil Hajj 06, 1445 A.H. Ph: 2158688, 2158997 Pages 4: Rs. 12

Govt. unveils Rs. 18.877 trillion relief-oriented federal budget

Proposes upto 25% increase in salaries, 15% in pensions of employees; Minimum wages raised from 32,000 to 37,000 rupees; Income tax rates for salaried individuals remain unchanged, with exemption limit at Rs. 600,000 annually; GDP growth target for the fiscal year 2024-25 is fixed at 3.6 percent, whereas the inflation rate is expected to remain 12 percent; Rs. 2,122bn earmarked for defence sector in budget 2024-25; Govt allocates record Rs1400 bln for PSDP; Rs 45 bn to be saved annually by abolishing public sector vacancies; Govt plans to invest a hefty amount in education sector in order to provide suitable environment for the education of children; BISP's budget increased up to Rs. 593 billion to support disadvantaged segments; 5,000 journalists, media workers to get health insurance in first phase; Announces tax relief on import of solar, aquaculture's raw material; No duty increase on import of essential items

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday unveiled the Rs18.877 trillion relief-oriented federal budget for the fiscal year 2024-25.

Presenting the federal budget 2024-25 in the National Assembly, the finance minister said that GDP growth target for the fiscal year 2024-25 is fixed at 3.6 percent, whereas the inflation rate is expected to remain 12 percent.

He said that the budget deficit to GDP during the period under review is estimated at 6.9 percent, whereas the primary surplus during the review period is projected at 1.0 percent of the GDP.

The minister said that the Revenue collection of the Federal Board of Revenue is estimated to Rs12,970 billion during up-coming fiscal year, adding that tax revenue collection during the current fiscal year grew by 38 percent and the provincial share would be Rs7,438 billion.

He said that the non-tax revenue targets of the federation are fixed at Rs3,587 billion, whereas the net income of the federal government would be Rs9,119 billion.

The total expenditures of the federal government is estimated at Rs18,877 billion out of the total amount of Rs9,775 billion would be spent on interest payments.

The government has allocated Rs1,400 billion for Public Sector Development Program in its current budget, adding that an additional amount of Rs100 billion would be allocated under Public Private Partnership, he added.

This year, he said, over all development budget was the highest in the country's history comprising Rs1,500 billion.

The minister said that

the government would provide Rs2,122 billion for defence, and Rs839 billion would be allocated for Civil Administration.

Meanwhile, an amount of Rs1,014 billion is also allocated for pension expenses, adding that Rs1,363 billion are allocated for the subsidy of the gas, electricity and other sectors.

The Finance Minister further said that total grants amounting to Rs1,777 billion is allocated for the promotion of BISP, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, merged districts of KP, HEC, railways and IT sectors.

Finance Minister said that the government has declared a historic federal PSDP valued at Rs1,500 billion, which was higher than 101 percent of the last year's revised PSDP.

He said that despite the fiscal constraints, the government has enhanced its

budgetary allocations, which would help to develop the volume of infrastructure including transportation, energy, IT and water resources and improve the living standards of the people in the country.

Senator Aurangzeb said that in PSDP 2024-25 special focus is paid to the completions of ongoing projects as 83 percent of resources are allocated for the completion of ongoing schemes and 17 percent for the new development schemes.

During the financial year 2024-25, it is proposed to allocate 59 percent of resources for the development of infrastructure development and 20 percent for the social sector development.

To ensure the equitable development in AJK, GB and merged districts of the KP, the government has allocated at 10 percent and around 11 percent for other sectors development including IT, telecom, science and technology, governance and production sector. The government has included projects related to support the productivity of exports oriented industries to enhance their competitiveness, to expend the digital infrastructure in the country.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb presented the Federal Budget 2024-2025 before the National Assembly of Pakistan.

It is fake and anti-people budget: Opposition

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Leader of the opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub termed the federal budget as anti-people and said that the government didn't consult any stakeholder.

Talking to media outside the parliament house after the budget speech of Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the opposition leader said that the constitution was violated for the very first time in National Assembly during the presentation of budget.

"I have presented four budgets in this house. These are fake documents as government didn't mention the total volume of budget and its deficit," said the opposition leader.

He added that the PTI government eliminated electricity loadshedding by 80 percent during its tenure.

"The PPP has stabbed the government in the back as their MNAs didn't want to participate in the budget session today," Ayub said.

MNA Ali Muhammad Khan of Sunni Ittehad Council said that the budget is anti-people as it doesn't have anything for the masses. "The party that got majority in the house was thrown on the opposition benches. The budget was presented by those who reached parliament on Form-47," said Ali Muhammad Khan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif signs the documents of the Federal Budget 2024-25 after its approval from the Federal Cabinet to be laid before the National Assembly.

Federal cabinet approves budget proposals for fiscal year 2024-25

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal cabinet on Wednesday approved the budgetary proposals for the coming fiscal year 2024-25.

Chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the special cabinet committee deliberated on the budget proposals and accorded its approval to the Finance Bill 2024.

The cabinet meeting also okayed the budgetary proposals to be presented before the National Assembly for its onward consideration.

Conspiracies to bankrupt Pakistan thwarted; economic stability achieved: PM Shahbaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday said that conspiracies to bankrupt the country had been thwarted, steering it away from economic hardships towards stability.

Presiding over the meeting of the Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Parliamentary Party at the Parliament House, he said, "We have left behind the conspiracies of those who dreamed of bankrupting the country and guided it from economic hardships to stability."

The prime minister briefed the parliamentary party about the budgetary proposals.

He assured that maximum relief would be provided to the common man in the budget, with specific measures aimed at easing the burden of workers, farmers, and salaried people.

He expressed gratitude to the party members and allies for their confidence in him and their full support of the government policies benefiting the common man and the country.

Pm Shehbaz urged the parliamentarians to actively

participate in the budget sessions, offering suggestions, and providing a robust and reasoned response to any falsehoods or propaganda regarding the budget. He stated, "History is witness to our efforts for rescuing Pakistan's economy through prioritizing national interests. With the guidance of Allah Almighty and under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, we averted bankruptcy and default in the country."

He said that a conspiratorial group posed a threat to the country's security and undermined those who had sacrificed their lives for it.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the Almighty entrusted him with serving Pakistan for the second time, expressing his determination to resolve the nation's issues.

Resolving to meet everyone's expectations, the prime minister lauded the trust of brotherly countries and investors in the government's economic policies and increasing the foreign investment.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the rightsizing of the government.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov calls on Minister for Defence & Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

Khawaja Asif says: Pakistan views Azerbaijan important due to strategic location, immense resources

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Defence, Defence Production and Aviation, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday told the Azerbaijan Ambassador that Pakistan views Azerbaijan as an important country due to its strategic location, immense resources, progressive outlook and fast-growing economy.

The minister expressed these remarks during a meeting with Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov, who called on him here on Wednesday, a news release said.

The minister highlighted the importance of bilateral brotherly relations between two countries which are based on historical, cultural and religious commonalities.

Deputy PM post honorary sans any office: IHC told

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Cabinet Division on Wednesday informed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that the designation of deputy prime minister was an honorary post, and no special office had been established in that regard.

IHC Chief Justice Amir Farooq, heard the plea of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sher Afzal Marwat, challenging the appointment of Ishaq Dar

as deputy prime minister. Defence counsel Riaz Hanif Rahi asserted that Ishaq Dar's appointment as deputy prime minister was honorary and urged the court to form a larger bench to address the dual appointment cases in the interest of good governance.

Some 50 petitioners were under hearing in courts pertaining to dual appointments, he claimed.

Subsequently, the court adjourned the hearing.

Three ANF personnel martyred in encounter with smugglers

RAWALPINDI (APP): At least three Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) personnel were martyred on Wednesday in a shootout with suspected drug traffickers near Turkey toll plaza, Jhelum.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, the suspects were traveling on GT Road when they were signaled to stop at the toll plaza. The smugglers tried to escape from the scene. The ANF team after a brief chase managed to intercept them when the suspects opened fire on the ANF team, resulting in the martyrdom of three personnel, including Head Constable Gulzar, Lance Naik Mazhar and a civilian. A jawan and the civilian lost their lives on the spot while another jawan was shifted to District Headquarters Hospital, Jhelum where he succumbed to his injuries.

Government decides to extend cabinet

ISLAMABAD (Online): Federal government has decided to extend federal cabinet.

More ministers from coalition partners will be taken in the cabinet.

According to sources two ministers each from MQM and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) will be included in cabinet. More ministers from PML-N will also be taken in the cabinet.

PPP assures Govt to extend support in budget vote

ISLAMABAD (INP): The People's Party and the PML-N have reached to an understanding with regard to the federal budget.

The PPP despite showing its reservations with regard to the budget will vote for it, sources said.

The party leaders earlier said that it didn't yet decide to vote for or against the federal budget being announced by the federal government today.

Sources said that the matters between two allied parties have been settled at the top leadership level.

The People's Party will extend its full support to the PML-N for approval of the budget. "Despite protest and speeches in the parliament, the PPP will support passage of the budget," sources said.

According to sources, the government has assured the PPP to add some of its proposals in the budget. The PPP leadership in quick pro quo has assured to vote

for the PML-N budget.

The PML-N had requested to the PPP for co-operation in passing the budget.

Earlier, PPP leader Nayya Bukhari had said that the party has yet to decide to support or oppose the budget.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday met with President Asif Ali Zardari and discussed the country's overall economic situation and the upcoming annual budget 2024-25.

Federal Minister for Planning and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal also attended the meeting, according to a President House press release. President Zardari emphasised that the interests of the low income and middle class should be protected in the annual budget. He also assured the prime minister of his support for the national development and achievement of fiscal targets.



ISLAMABAD: Women scuffle with the police during a protest to demand rise in wage and pension, whilst they march towards the National Assembly in the Federal Capital, before Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presents the country's annual budget for fiscal year 2024-25.

Security forces kill 181 terrorists in Balochistan, Sindh & KP perations

RAWALPINDI (INP): As many as 181 terrorists have been sent to hell in 7,745 operations conducted by security forces, who are determined to eliminating the menace of terrorism from the country, from April 1 to June 10.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), 2,701 operations were conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 4,902 in Balochistan and 142 in Sindh. During these operations, 181 terrorists were sent to hell. As many as 128 terrorists were killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 51 in Balochistan and two in Sindh.

In May, 12 terrorists were killed in Balochistan while 42 were killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. 61 terrorists were arrested from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan during this month. Owing to the timely action of the security forces, the banned terrorist organization TTP failed in its nefarious designs in the urban areas. To cover up its

failure, the TTP forced and targeted the poor people of the tribal areas for kidnapping for ransom and target killing, the military's media wing said. Besides, at least 20 infiltration attempts in Bajaur, Dir and Chitral areas were thwarted due to timely intelligence. A TTP network targeting Chinese citizens has been busted in Besham. The terrorists involved in the Besham attack are facing cases in the courts.

Security forces ambushed the terrorists during infiltration from the Zhob border in which seven terrorists were killed and two others arrested. Twelve terrorists were ambushed in an intelligence-based operation in DI Khan and Tank.

About 19 terrorists were killed during an intelligence-based operation in North Waziristan. Security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation and raid in Sheikh Badin area of Lakki Marwat and arrested 11 terrorists.

Security forces also foiled an infiltration attempt in Pishin and Qila Abdullah in Balochistan in which five terrorists were killed and one arrested.

During the last month, two suicide bombers, including an Afghan citizen, were arrested along with their handlers while infiltrating and their suicide jackets were also recovered. During the successful operation, the security forces recovered a large quantity of arms, ammunition, explosives, including four suicide jackets and 14 IEDs, from Balochistan. In Quetta, security forces foiled TTP's big plan to carry out attacks during Muharram and eliminated the terrorist network.

The TTP leadership has become distraught and panicked by the attacks by the security forces. With the full support of the nation, the security forces are determined to eradicate terrorism from Pakistan. There is no place for the TTP or any other terrorist group on the soil of Pakistan.

CM Maryam lauds PM, his team for presenting people-friendly budget

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has commended Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for presenting a people-friendly budget amid challenging economic conditions.

In her message on Wednesday, the chief minister highlighted that under the guidance of PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, a balanced and people-friendly federal budget has been presented.

CM Maryam Nawaz said that the journey towards sustainable development has begun, with the nation gradually emerging from an economic crisis. The budget aligns perfectly with the aspirations of the people, she asserted.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif further noted that the federal budget aims to provide maximum relief to the public, expressing optimism that the country's situation will continue to improve. "By the grace of Allah Almighty, inflation is decreasing," she added, reaffirming her belief that the nation is on a path to better economic stability and prosperity.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Unyielding onslaught

Seven soldiers paid the ultimate price in Lakki Marwat on Sunday when their vehicle was blown up in an IED attack, another painful reminder of the state's inability to effectively counter rising terrorism. That same night, policemen successfully defended their post in Bajaur from a militant attack with no loss of lives. While we may be grateful for small mercies, it must be acknowledged such incidents are occurring with alarming frequency: CRSS data shows 281 fatalities of civilians and security personnel in the first quarter of 2024. This necessitates action on a war footing.

Several pivotal developments have led to the resurgence of terrorist activities in Pakistan, notably the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021. The collapse of the ill-advised ceasefire with the banned TTP has only exacerbated the situation. Meanwhile, Kabul's reluctance to rein in the group and ensure Afghan soil is not used for launching attacks against Pakistan has made an already messy situation even messier. Despite repeated diplomatic engagements and cross-border actions, the Taliban have shown little inclination to curb the activities of their ideological brethren. And so, an emboldened TTP has been able to regroup and mount sophisticated attacks against targets inside Pakistan. The presence of TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan, reportedly supported by modern weapons and financial aid from the Taliban, poses a significant threat to Pakistan's national security.

To counter this escalating threat, Pakistan must develop a strategy that integrates both military and civilian efforts. The National Action Plan needs to be revitalised and enforced with renewed vigour. Our security forces need to be adept at handling asymmetric warfare including detecting and defusing IEDs, urban combat, and intelligence gathering. The military must be supported by well-trained, well-equipped police forces to ensure a holistic approach to counterterrorism. Ensuring that no space is available to militants and their sympathisers is just as crucial. This includes rigorous monitoring of educational institutions, madrasahs, and other potential recruitment grounds for extremists. The state must also cut off funding sources for terrorist groups. Border security is another area to consider. This involves not only physical barriers but also the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies and increased patrols to prevent cross-border infiltration by militants. All the while, diplomatic efforts must continue to exert pressure on the Afghan Taliban to take concrete actions against the TTP. This should be complemented by engaging with stakeholders such as China, Russia, Iran and the UAE, to form a united front against the threat posed by Afghanistan-based militants. The battle against terrorism is not solely the responsibility of the military. Civilian institutions, LEAs, and society at large must get to work to counter this menace. The martyrdom of our security personnel must not go in vain.

Thinking pink

Arooj Waheed Dar

Even in 2024, women stand a long way from accessing equal opportunities with men. The persistent gender disparities across various spheres of life — education, employment, healthcare, and beyond — are stark reminders of the structural barriers confronting women in Pakistan. Despite efforts, the nation consistently lags on gender parity indices, raising concerns about the adequacy and sufficiency of initiatives targeted at closing the gender gap. Placed 142nd out of 146 countries on the WEF's 2023 Global Gender Gap Index, it is evident that significant strides are needed to address gender inequities in Pakistan.

An examination of past budgetary allocations and policy documents unveils a persistent neglect of gender considerations, manifesting in inadequate resource allocation for women across crucial sectors. These systemic imbalances perpetuate gender inequalities, thwarting the full realisation of Pakistan's human potential. Recent stabilisation policies have further tilted the scales against women due to discriminate access to formal capital markets, decent jobs, financial and digital tools, etc.

As the new fiscal year approaches, it is imperative to remind the government of the gender issues that have only received perfunctory attention over the years. Policymakers must acknowledge that no economic recovery can be sustainable if half the country's population is inhibited in its capacity to contribute productively, underscoring the need for gender-centric policies.

While economic revival must remain a top

priority, any effort towards this goal without adequate female representation is like building a house of cards. Sustainable economic recovery is contingent upon the mainstreaming of gender-centric policies across all sectors. This necessitates integrating the gendered impacts of policies into the planning process, rather than treating them as an afterthought.

In this context, the federal and provincial budgets can be leveraged by respective governments to address disparities through gender-responsive budgeting. GRB entails evaluating the gendered impacts of budgetary allocations, integrating gender equality in planning processes, and establishing monitoring mechanisms for greater accountability. The overarching goal is to ensure equitable distribution of resources for inclusive development.

It is disconcerting that despite the widespread adoption of GRB in many countries, including South Asian counterparts India and Bangladesh, Pakistan has yet to present a gender-responsive budget. As a first step, all PC-1 forms must incorporate a dedicated section obligating departments to thoroughly assess the gendered impacts of the proposed projects. Projects that help level the playing field should be prioritised over those that magnify distortions. Additionally, macroeconomic policies must only be implemented after carefully assessing their differential impacts on women.

To further promote gender equity, several key demands must be addressed, including ensuring equal employment opportunities, pay equity, supporting women-owned businesses with financial in-

centives, and increasing funding for girls' education, especially in underserved areas. Expanding maternal, reproductive, and mental health services, establishing affordable childcare facilities, and strengthening laws and support services against gender-based violence are also essential, particularly in the face of climatic challenges. Additionally, enhancing social protection programmes for more coverage, along with increasing digital and financial access is essential to promote equity.

Greater representation of women in decision-making roles is of utmost importance. Currently, political representation seems confined to a few privileged women, often detached from the everyday challenges faced by the majority.

This lack of representative female voices in the political arena results in the formation of ineffective policies that overlook critical gender issues. Developing mechanisms to facilitate participatory budgeting can help address this concern.

The government must also prioritise data consolidation to support evidence-based policymaking. At present, the inadequate targeting of social programmes stemming from deficiencies in data undermines the effectiveness of initiatives. With limited fiscal space, the government must calibrate each and every budgetary allocation judiciously for maximised impact, for which data is key. In a nutshell, mainstreaming gender considerations across all sectors during the planning phase can enable policy-makers to significantly enhance the prospects for fairer, more inclusive economic resurgence. — Courtesy Dawn

Whither Europe?

Mahir Ali

Shortly after Joe Biden and a phalanx of European leaders gathered in Normandy last week to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings that launched the endgame in the continent's bitterest conflict, citizens in 27 states began to vote in European parliamentary elections that were predicted to demonstrate a surge in support for precisely the kind of ideologies that purportedly perished in 1944-45.

One aspect of Operation Overlord that seldom scores a mention in current commentary is that the Soviet Union had been pleading for a second front since soon after Operation Barbarossa, when the Nazis swept across its territory three years before D-Day. There were those in Europe who relished the prospect of a combat between the USSR and Nazi Germany, and the Normandy landings were at least partly motivated by the fear that the Red Army would overrun Europe and take sole credit for Hitler's defeat.

Soviet forces did indeed reach Berlin before their Western allies — and a brief camaraderie made way before long for the Cold War. Stalin's regime is accurately accused of imposing its will on Eastern Europe. Somewhat more subtly, the US did the same in Western Europe. One of the CIA's first missions was to ensure that Italy did not vote in a communist or socialist majority in its first post-war poll. Part of the effort involved incorporating Nazi operatives or collaborators into 'democratic' Europe's postwar establishments.

The precursor of France's Rassemblement National, whose gains in last week's polls panicked Emmanuel Macron into calling a snap parliamentary election, was Front National, which was co-

founded by Nazi collaborators. RN leader Marine Le Pen has been trying to cleanse the party of its fascist associations, including by distancing it from Germany's Alternative für Deutschland, some of whose leaders refuse to stop expressing their admiration for the Third Reich. Notwithstanding some recent scandals involving its international associations — kowtowing to the Kremlin, for instance, and spying for China — the AfD did better in the Euro polls than any component of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's supposedly centre-left coalition, but not as well as the Christian Democrats (CDU).

The CDU's Ursula von der Leyen, who greeted the European election results by offering the assurance that the centre is holding, hopes to win a second term as European Commission president. She has lately been courting Giorgia Meloni, whose 'post-neofascist' Brothers of Italy came on top in another former Axis state. Meloni postures on the international stage as the acceptable face of Europe's far right, while her government's domestic attitudes reflect a clearer image of its perverse inclinations.

A defining feature of European politics in recent decades has been the extent to which the centre (both left and right) has sought to 'combat' the hard right by co-opting its ideas, notably (but not exclusively) on immigration. In many parts of Europe, for instance, economic distress is related to ageing societies and diminishing populations. But where is the party advocating better-organised immigration as a possible solution? The focus is identitarian, powered mainly by white Christian nationalism, and dedicated to excluding black and brown ethnicities. Hence the

EU devotes its energies not to educating the masses but to bribing North African states to detain and brutalise the politically or economically persecuted unfortunate who aspire to a new life on the fringes of a European experiment that they don't realise has failed.

The second round of the French election, on July 7, will precede the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics barely by a fortnight. Macron is obviously hoping that the anti-fascist voters will emerge to thwart the likelihood of an FN majority. As many commentators have indicated, though, it could mean cohabiting with the hard right for the remainder of his presidential term, and then handing over to Le Pen in 2027.

Whether or not it crossed voters' minds, the war in Ukraine was a factor in the EU elections, with some of the far right as well as far left parties calling for accommodation with Vladimir Putin — the D-Day ceremonies also highlighted Russia's aggression as an echo of Nazi attitudes from long ago. Without excusing Putin's self-serving trespasses, it might have been more fruitful to focus on why Moscow might suspect the intentions of hostile neighbours.

Neither the EU's dedication to Ukraine nor its devotion to Israel, notwithstanding the latter's genocidal tendencies, is likely to shift much in the near future, but the future of the any-how inadequate European Green Deal is in doubt. Add a second Trump administration to the equation, and humanity's short-term future shifts from gloom to doom, regardless of anything Putin or Xi Jinping might be plotting. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Govt earmarks Rs 267,952m for various ongoing, new schemes of power sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has allocated an amount of Rs 267,952.773 million for various ongoing and new schemes of power sector in annual public sector development programme (PSDP) for year 2024-25.

According to the budgetary document released here Wednesday, out of total allocation, a sum of Rs 113,760.301 million has been specified for ongoing schemes through PSDP, Rs 17,401 million for new schemes and Rs 136,791.472

million (own resources) for year 2024-25. Out of total allocation, the local component stands at Rs 135,564 million and foreign loan component is Rs 132,388.208 million during the said period.

For ongoing schemes, a sum of Rs 4500 million each has been earmarked for 220/132 Kv GIS substation Dhabiji and 220 Kv Haripur Substation, Rs 6,000 million for 220Kv Swabi Substation, Rs 6,500 million for 500 Kv Allama Iqbal Industrial City, Rs 1,424.360 million for

electrification works at different valleys of district Chitral, Rs 4,536.225 million for 220 kV Quaid-e-Azam Apparel and Business Park Grid Station, Rs 38,000 million for installation of 2x600 MW Coal Fired Power Project GENCO-1 (Jamshoro), Rs 3,808 million for Power Distribution Enhancement Investment Program-II, Rs 4,499 million electricity distribution efficiency improvement project (MEPCO), Rs 3,691.509 million for electricity

distribution efficiency improvement project (HESCO) and Rs 2,600 million for 500 kV Matiari—Moro-R Y Khan. For New Scheme, an amount of Rs 6,250 million has been earmarked for land acquisition for installation of 1200 MW solar power plant Layyah, Rs 4,500 million for electricity distribution improvement and Rs 6,000 million for installation of assets performance management system on 100 kV and 200 kV distribution transformers.



Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Investment Board Abdul Aleem Khan presiding over a meeting of NHA in Islamabad.



LAHORE: Business community persons and LCCI members listening the budget 2024-25 at LCCI.

UAE-based British Pakistani launches Trade Gate, offering diverse trading opportunities

ISLAMABAD (APP): UAE-based British Pakistani Shaheel Ahmad Meer of the Meer Group launched the first Trade Gate branch in Dubai, aiming to innovate trading and joint ventures by integrating various business sectors.

It offers scholarships, practical training, and diverse trading opportunities across sectors like EV, automotive, e-commerce, real estate, and luxury cars, said a press release issued here.

Meer's vision is to democratise financial

education and global investment opportunities, fostering a vibrant community through seminars and networking.

The initiative plans global expansion, aiming to lead in trading education and business investment globally, starting with Dubai as a transformative milestone.

Trade Gate goes beyond a conventional training center, becoming a dynamic hub that empowers individuals with the knowledge and tools for success in trading and joint ventures.

Its holistic approach

to wealth creation and management offers participants a broad platform to explore and invest in various sectors.

Trade Gate offers diverse trading opportunities, allowing participants to explore sectors such as electric vehicles, automotive, commerce, real estate, and luxury car advisory services. With expert guidance and investment prospects, Trade Gate helps individuals capitalize on cutting-edge trends and market dynamics, paving the way for trading success.

Chairman WAPDA reviews inspection of Neelum Jhelum Project's Head Race Tunnel'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) Wednesday visited Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project to review ongoing inspection of the Head Race Tunnel.

He reached Dam (Weir) site of the Project located at Nauseri, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, said a press release issued here.

The Chairman visited in detail the de-watered head race tunnel to inspect and review damages that might have occurred to the tunnel. He was

accompanied by Project Manager, Neelum Jhelum Consultants James Stevenson.

The Consultants, the Contractors and the Project Team briefed the Chairman about the progress achieved so far.

It was briefed that de-watering of 48-Km long head race tunnel had been completed from the elevation of 1012 feet to 607 feet above mean sea level.

Subsequently, inspection of the head race tunnel has commenced.

KP Governor for economic well-being of KP people, alleviation of deprivations

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi in a meeting with Chairman State Life Corporation Shoaib Javid Hussain here at the Governor House on Wednesday emphasized the economic well-being and alleviation of deprivation for the residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During the meeting, discussions were held on improving State Life facilities in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, said a press release issued here after the meeting adding that the governor issued directives to strengthen the health and Takaful zones of State Life in Dera Ismail Khan.

The meeting also discussed the SOS Village project, with an announcement of full cooperation from the Governor House. Additionally, deliberations took place on a pilot project for expensive treatments initiated by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Economists, businessmen, people laud federal budget 2024-25

PESHAWAR (APP): Senior economists, traders, businessmen and people of all walks of life Wednesday highly lauded the federal budget 2024-25 and termed it goal oriented with maximum relief provided to all sectors in the country.

Dr Muhammad Naem, former Chairman Economics Department, University of Peshawar told APP that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and their

finance team deserved full credit and appreciation for presenting a goal-oriented budget despite prevailing economic and fiscal challenges.

He appreciated the three-pronged strategy announced by the Finance Minister to reform the pension scheme in line with international best practices. He said after reforms in the pension scheme, the pension liability would be reduced considerably in the next three decades.

Dr Naem supported the proposal of launching a contributory pension scheme for new recruitment for which the government would deposit its share every month and praised the proposal of the pension fund.

Dr Muhammad Naem highly appreciated the strong 6.25 percent expansion in the agriculture sector of Pakistan as indicated by the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2023-24, which is the highest in 19 years.

Retailers may face penalty for selling smuggled cigarettes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The retailers may face penalty for selling fake, smuggled and non-taxpaid cigarettes as strict action has been proposed against such practices in the Federal Budget for the fiscal year 2024-2025. Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb proposed the strict action while presenting the Federal Budget 2024-25 in the National Assembly on Wednesday.

Coca-Cola appoints Volkan as new VP for Pak & Afghanistan region

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coca-Cola Company has appointed Volkan Öngüç as new Vice President for Pakistan and Afghanistan of Eurasia & Middle East Operation Unit of the company.

Volkan's professional experience in commercial management, business development, and sales spans over two decades. His expertise in revenue growth management, both in Turkey and internationally, have been

a key asset for the Company since he joined in April 2021, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. Speaking about his vision for Coca-Cola Pakistan, Volkan Öngüç said, "I believe Pakistan is a country of immense potential with over \$1 billion invested in the country by the Coca-Cola System. This is truly a second home and has many similarities with my home country Türkiye, such as our love for music."

Task forces to be formed to fight KP's case, address problems of universities: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi said that a task force comprising representatives of political parties would be formed to fight the case of the province.

He was talking to a representative delegation of Peshawar Press Club (PPC) led by its President Arshad Aziz Malik here Wednesday. The Governor said that the task force would be formed after consultation with political parties with an aim to fight the case of the province and to improve the education system.

He told that consultation process with political parties was underway and afterwards, political leadership would be contacted to nominate their representatives for inclusion in the task force.

He said that task force would prepare papers mentioning arguments and reasons, adding it would serve as a milestone for others and help getting rights of the province.

The KP Governor said that a similar task force would be constituted to address education sector and to resolve issues being faced by universities.

He also expressed concern over deteriorating standard of education in Edwards College and said that it was astonishing that provincial government was ignoring education sector and on the contrary, Punjab and Sindh governments have allocated a considerable amount of Rs. 6 billion and 20 billion respectively for universities.

He said that the Chairman State Life has also been directed to devise a strategy to resolve

pension issues in universities. The Governor said that, he was being informed that Peshawar-D I Khan Motorway was not executed according to the standard and its length has been increased without any reason. He accepted the invitation to visit PPC and said that he would also bring the Federal Information Minister to the Club. The delegation also invited Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to visit PPC. Earlier, the President PPC informed the Governor about the affairs of the Club, including strength of its members, audit system and medical facilities. He briefed the Governor about the working of the Capacity Building Committee of the Club and the amount provided to members on Eids and under the head of medical expenses.



PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Iran Reza Amiri Moghadam and Consul General Ali Banafshekhan called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor House Peshawar.

US consul general Lahore meets Punjab law minister

LAHORE (APP): US Consul General Lahore Kristin K Hawkins on Wednesday met Minister for Law/Communication and Works Sohaib Ahmad Bharth at his office and discussed the matter of mutual interest.

Political Assistant Dukless and Secretary Communication and Works were also present.

The minister briefed that the Punjab government had been taking all measures for the protection of minorities living in Punjab, and it had been ensured that they

must have equal progress opportunities in the province.

The Punjab government was focusing on environmental issues and plantation drive he added and further disclosed that defamation law was very much beneficial to curb the fake news and in this regard Punjab government appreciated the constructive criticism. He further disclosed that all stakeholders were taken on board and their suggestions were considered at the time of formulation of the defamation law.

Two arrested for packing fake engine oil

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration on Wednesday arrested two people for packing fake engine oil and seized packing materials during the ongoing crackdown against adulteration.

According to the district administration, the relevant team conducted raids on GT Road Chughalpora, where two people were found packing counterfeit engine oil in the renowned brand's packaging material, and the warehouse was sealed.

A large quantity of counterfeit motor oil, estimated at 10,000 liters, intended for distribution.

Youth dies in dumper, bike collision

SARGODHA (APP): A motorcyclist died after being hit by an over-speeding dumper, here on Wednesday.

Police said that a recklessly driven dumper knocked down Muhammad Asif Gujjar near Chak No 138-SB.

The deceased was a resident of Chak No 128-SB. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem.

Sillanwali police have registered a case against the dumper driver and started investigation.

PHC launches "Advocate's Case Diary" web application

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC), Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim on Wednesday launched a web application "Advocate's Case Diary" which went online on the official website of the Court.

Deployment of the web application marked a significant step forward in the modernization of the Judiciary, one that embraces the transformative power of technology.

The web application Advocate Case Diary is not just a software program but a bridge between tradition and innovation.

This web application streamlines processes and judicial procedures by making them more cost-

effective and efficient.

Some features of the web application, the Advocate Case Diary includes fixation of cases of each advocate on a calendar basis. Moreover, it will keep a record of all pending as well as decided cases of a particular advocate.

The web application has a feature to display all issued summonses in a particular case as well as show the complete fixation history of a particular case.

The advocates will have the facility to access all scanned records of their cases with added features like print and download options.

Besides facilitating the lawyers, the web application has the feature of displaying a real-time online cause list.



LAHORE: US Consul General in Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins meeting with Punjab Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan.

NAB takes action on sugar broker's mysterious disappearance

LAHORE (APP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore Director General Amjad Majeed Aulakh takes swift action against a mega sugar scam by authorizing an instant inquiry into the disappearance of a sugar broker named Sheikh Rashid, who absconded with billions of rupees in investments from traders and sugar stockists across Punjab.

Keeping in view, a high-level investigation team has been constituted to probe the multibillion scam that has left countless investors of Punjab and

several cities of Sindh, in distress. As per details, the NAB investigation team's initial raids uncover a web of deceit by revealing warehouses and shops in Sadiqabad, being used to stock misappropriated commodities by accused Sheikh Rashid and his accomplices. Taking decisive action under Section 12 of NAO 1999, DG NAB freezes all properties and stocked commodities owned by the accused persons and appoints Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sadiqabad as "Receiver" for the frozen assets.



LAHORE: Provincial Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat and others in a group photo on the occasion of opening ceremony of Digital Education at a local hotel of the provincial capital.

Provincial ombudsman chairs monthly review meeting

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Ombudsman, Syed Jamal Ud Din Shah while chairing the monthly review meeting of the secretariat said that administrative accountability and measures for the prevention of abuse of authority are vital for maintaining good governance.

He said that it is the constitutional right of every

citizen to file complaints against the misuse of power and authority by any government department. He said that the Ombudsman Secretariat, since its inception has followed the steps to further enhance efficiency and to produce qualitative results for the satisfaction of complainants.

Pesco, police launch joint operation against power theft

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) and police on Wednesday launched a joint operation to curb power theft in the province. According to the PESCO spokesman, the KP police had provided the personnel and more than 800 policemen would collaborate with the company's teams in the field across all circles, divisions, and subdivisions of the company. Under the joint operation plan, the police force would accompany each SDO along with their respective staff in the field. He said that the operation was not only aimed at apprehending electricity thieves but also to impose fines and register cases against them. He hoped that the joint operation would lead to swift recovery of dues besides to decrease incidents of attacks.

Indus Telemetry system launched to revolutionize irrigation system in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): In a landmark development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government with support from the USAID and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)—deployed the Indus Telemetry System across 11 main irrigation canals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

This cutting-edge technology will revolutionize water management and reporting

in the province's irrigation system.

Minister of Irrigation for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aqib Ullah Khan officially launched the Indus Telemetry System at a ceremony held here on Wednesday.

"The deployment of the Indus Telemetry System marks a transformative step in our efforts to ensure sustainable water management and equitable distribution.

International News

Russia fires more missiles and drones at Ukraine ahead of diplomatic effort

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russian forces fired missiles and drones at the Kyiv region and five other areas of Ukraine in a nighttime attack, officials said Wednesday, ahead of several days of intense diplomatic activity around the war that is now in its third year.

Ukraine's air force said it shot down 29 out of 30 air targets, including four cruise missiles, one Kinzhal ballistic missile, and 24 Shahed drones. Several people were injured, authorities said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised the air force's response, calling it a "daily achievement." He has repeatedly appealed to Ukraine's Western partners to provide more air defense systems, and the United States has agreed to send another Patriot missile system,

two U.S. officials said late Tuesday. How best to support Ukraine's efforts to stop Russia's invasion will be a central issue in international meetings in coming days.

Kyiv's outgunned and outnumbered forces are battling to hold back the bigger Russian army, which is trying to exploit Ukrainian vulnerabilities. Ukraine has been short of troops, ammunition and air defenses in recent months as the Kremlin's forces try to cripple the national power supply and punch through the front line in eastern parts of the country.

Ukraine will need to weather the Russian onslaught through the summer, military analysts say, and in the meantime train more soldiers, build fortifications and hope that the provision of Western military aid picks up speed so

that in 2025 Kyiv may be able to mount its own offensive.

Leaders of the Group of Seven rich democracies, including U.S. President Joe Biden, are due to gather Thursday in Italy for their annual summit to discuss how to squeeze more money for Ukraine from Russian assets frozen in their countries.

Also Thursday, defense chiefs from the U.S., Europe and other nations hold their monthly meeting on Ukraine's security needs. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is to host the event in Brussels.

Next weekend, representatives of nearly 90 countries and organizations, half from Europe, are to attend a Swiss-hosted Ukraine peace summit, which will take place without Russia.

'Immense' scale of Gaza killings amount to crime against humanity, UN inquiry says

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: Both Israel and Hamas committed war crimes in the early stages of the Gaza war, a UN inquiry found on Wednesday, saying that Israel's actions also constituted crimes against humanity because of the immense civilian losses. The findings were from two parallel reports, one focusing on the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks and another on Israel's military response, published by the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI), which has an unusually broad mandate to collect evidence and identify perpetrators of international crimes committed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel does not cooperate with the commission, which it says has an anti-Israel bias. The COI says Israel obstructs its work and prevented investigators from accessing both Israel and the occupied Palestin-

ian territories. Israel's diplomatic mission to the UN in Geneva rejected the findings. "The COI has once again proven that its actions are all in the service of a narrow-led political agenda against Israel," said Meirav Eilon Shahr, Israel's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva. Hamas did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

By Israel's count more than 1,200 people were killed and 250 taken hostage in the Oct. 7 cross-border attacks that sparked a military retaliation in Gaza that has since killed over 37,000 people, by Palestinian tallies.

The reports, which cover the conflict through to end-December, found that both sides committed war crimes including torture, murder or willful killing; outrages upon personal dignity; and inhuman or cruel treatment.

Rwanda says UN refugee agency lying in British asylum policy case

Monitoring Desk
KIGALI: Rwanda said the UN refugee agency had lied when the organisation told a British court this week that asylum seekers sent to the East African country could be moved on again to states where they risked torture or death.

Lawyers representing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told the court on Monday that Rwanda's asylum system was inadequate, as part of a challenge to the British government's policy to deport asylum seekers there. The lawyers said removing asylum seekers to Rwanda put them at risk of being transferred again in a banned process known as refoulement—building on past evidence which formed an important part of the UK Supreme Court's reasoning when it ruled last year that the British plan.



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a UNRWA school sheltering displaced people, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.

Hezbollah vows to escalate attacks after Israel kills a top commander

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Hezbollah fired big barrages of rockets at Israel on Wednesday and vowed to ramp up its attacks in retaliation for an Israeli strike which killed a senior Hezbollah field commander, as the conflict across the Lebanese-Israeli border escalated sharply.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel have been trading fire since the eruption of the Gaza war in October, in steadily intensifying hostilities that have fuelled concern of a bigger confrontation between the heavily armed adversaries. The Israeli strike in the south Lebanon village of Jouaiyya late on

Tuesday killed three Hezbollah fighters alongside the senior field commander Taleb Abdallah, also known as Abu Taleb, Israel and three security sources in Lebanon said.

He was the most senior Hezbollah commander killed during eight months of hostilities, one of the sources said.

The Israeli military confirmed that it had killed him as well as the three other Hezbollah fighters in a strike on a command and control centre.

The sources in Lebanon said he was Hezbollah's commander for the central region of the southern border strip.

Biden heads to G7 summit focused on Ukraine aid, China's support for Russia

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden flies to Italy on Wednesday for meetings with Group of Seven leaders aimed at increasing pressure on Russia over its war against Ukraine and China for its support of Moscow and excess industrial capacity.

The G7 leaders arrive at the summit confronting myriad woes at home even

as they seek solutions for many of the world's most pressing problems.

Biden, 81, spent Tuesday evening at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, after a 12-member jury convicted his son Hunter Biden of lying about his drug use to illegally buy a gun in 2018, making him the first child of a sitting US president to be convicted of a crime.

Malawi VP, nine others killed in plane crash

Monitoring Desk
LILONGWE: Malawi's Vice President Saulos Chilima was killed in a plane crash, the nation's largest, on Tuesday, after searchers located the wreckage of the aircraft in a mist-shrouded forest. The military plane carrying Chilima, 51, and nine others disappeared on Monday, after it failed to land in the northern city of Mzuzu due to bad weather and was told to return to the capital, Lilongwe. Photographs shared by a member of the military rescue team showed army personnel standing on a foggy slope near debris bearing the registration number.

Kyiv hopes Russia will attend second Ukraine peace summit

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: Ahead of the first summit on peace in Ukraine, Kyiv said on Tuesday (July 11) it wanted Russia to attend a second summit, to receive an internationally agreed roadmap towards ending the conflict.

Moscow said it had no interest in joining this weekend's meeting and so was not invited by hosts Switzerland.

Russian warships enter Havana harbor

Monitoring Desk
HAVANA: Russian navy ships churmed into Havana harbor on Wednesday, a stopover the U.S. and Cuba said posed no threat but which was widely seen as a Russian show of force as tensions rise over the Ukraine war.

Small groups of fishermen and curious onlookers lined the Malecon seafont boulevard in light rain to welcome the ships as they passed the 400-year-old Morro castle at the harbor's entrance.

The first to arrive was a fuel ship, the "Akademik Pashin" and a tug, the "Nikolay Chiker," while a Russian navy frigate and nuclear-powered submarine waited offshore and were expected to enter the harbor by mid-morning.

The frigate and submarine, part of the group of four Russian

vessels that arrived off Cuba on Wednesday, had conducted missile drills in the Atlantic Ocean en route to the island, Russia's defence ministry said the previous day.

Cuba said last week that the visit was standard practice by naval vessels from countries friendly to Havana.

The communist-run government's foreign ministry said the ships carried no nuclear weapons, something echoed by U.S. officials.

"We have been monitoring the ships' paths closely," a U.S. official told Reuters on condition of anonymity late on Tuesday.

"At no point have the ships or submarine posed a direct threat to the United States."

Havana is just 100 miles (160 km) from Key West, Florida, home to a U.S. Naval Air Station.

At least 41 die in a fire at a building housing workers in Kuwait

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: At least 41 people died when a fire swept through a building that housed workers in Kuwait early Wednesday, and officials said the blaze appeared to be linked to code violations.

Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah confirmed the toll and ordered the arrest of the building's owner during a visit to the site, local media reported.

"We will address the issue of labor overcrowding," he said. "I'm now going to see what violations were committed here and I will deal with the owner of the property."

Local media said scores of workers were

living in the building in the southern Mangaf district, without giving their nationality.

Col. Sayed Hassan al-Mousawi, head of the firefighters' Accident Investigation Department, said there were dozens of casualties and that the final death toll may be higher.

Kuwait, like other Persian Gulf countries, has a large community of migrant workers who far outnumber the local population.

The nation of some 4.2 million people is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of New Jersey but has the world's sixth-largest known oil reserves.

A fire at an oil refinery in 2022 killed four people.

Maqbool, vice CEO of Huawei discusses progress on agreements

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, and Vice CEO of Huawei Pakistan, Ray Yu, on Wednesday discussed progress on agreements signed during the Prime Minister's visit to China.

During the meeting, Dr. Siddiqui highlighted the pivotal role that Pakistani youth can play in the development of the Information Technology sector.

He appreciated Huawei's commitment to training 200,000 young people and offered the Ministry's support in es-

establishing a Training Cloud to achieve this goal.

"Every year, 25,000 IT graduates complete their education from universities in Pakistan; however, only 5,000 secure jobs. We need to equip our youth with training in modern technology to bridge this gap," Dr. Siddiqui remarked.

He also highlighted the immense opportunities for cooperation between Pakistan and China in the private sector, emphasizing the need to harness these opportunities to further enhance the partnership between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Vice CEO Huawei Pakistan, Ray Yu called on Federal Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.

Amir Muqam thanks PM for tax exemption for erstwhile FATA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Wednesday expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for granting a tax exemption to the erstwhile FATA and PATA/Malakand division in the federal budget for 2024-25.

Speaking to the media outside Parliament House following the budget announcement, he appreciated the efforts of Prime Minister's Advisor, Rana Sanaullah Khan, Chairman of the Steering Committee

for the Prime Minister's Program for the Development of newly merged districts.

He expressed hope that this initiative would promote business activities in the region, highlighting that the government has considered the issues faced by the people of former FATA/PATA and extended the tax exemption for another year despite challenging circumstances.

He said that this decision would boost commercial activities in these areas, providing direct benefits to both the business community and the general public.

Budget 2024-25 to safeguard rights of common man: Dastgir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Protecting the rights of the average person is the federal and provincial government's main concern, according to senior PML-N politician Engineer Khuram Dastgir Khan on Wednesday. This would be included in the budget for the forthcoming fiscal year, 2024-25.

Talking to PTV news channel, he said that vulnerable sections of society would be protected and top priority would be to reduce financial burden on common man.

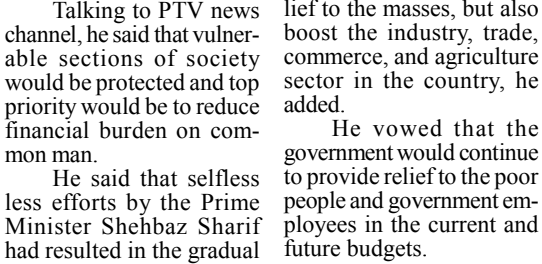
He said that selfless efforts by the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had resulted in the gradual

improvement of the economy and incentives in agriculture sector will not only strengthen the agriculture sector but also increase production.

He said we are giving incentives to IT sector which will boost its exports.

Despite the difficult circumstances, the budget would not only provide relief to the masses, but also boost the industry, trade, commerce, and agriculture sector in the country, he added.

He vowed that the government would continue to provide relief to the poor people and government employees in the current and future budgets.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed along with Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines Maria Agnes M. Cervantes cutting the cake on the occasion of the National Day of the Philippines at a local hotel.

Naqvi takes notice of delay in Capital's beautification plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has taken notice of the delay in Islamabad's beautification plan and ordered the immediate removal of the Member Environment of CDA.

The Interior Minister stated that any further delay in the project will not be tolerated and those of-

ficers who didn't perform would not have a place in his team.

He directed the CDA Chairman to appoint a hardworking and competent officer to the post of Member Environment, who can work round the clock to ensure the successful implementation of Islamabad's beautification plan.

NCRC launches State of Children in Pak Portal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) commemorated the World Day Against Child Labour by launching the State of Children in Pakistan portal and presenting its annual report for 2023-24. This event marks a significant step forward in the fight against child labour and the promotion of children's rights in Pakistan.

In her welcome remarks, Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq emphasized, "As we leave this room today, let us commit to becoming advo-

ates for change. Speak up against the silent exploitation happening in our midst. Let us not normalize young boys and girls working in our neighborhoods, sometimes in our own homes."

Speaking as the chief guest, Minister of Law and Justice and Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, affirmed the government's commitment, stating, "The Ministry of Human Rights is fully committed to supporting the efforts of the NCRC in their mission to end child labour and bring about legislative reforms."



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on the matters related to Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination.

Edu ministry introduces evening shifts to address enrolment challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has announced to introduce of evening shifts in 51 schools across the city, starting from the next academic session.

According to the Education Ministry, this initiative aims to address the challenges faced during the enrollment campaign, where many schools saw a significant increase in student numbers, with some primary classes exceeding 50 students per class and reaching 100.

To ensure quality education and a conducive learning environment, we will upgrade infrastructure in the designated schools and arranged additional honorarium for teachers to support the evening shifts."

PM orders building Health Tower in Islamabad to house hospitals, medical, nursing universities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to build a health tower of international standard in the federal capital to house hospitals, medical and nursing universities, modern laboratories, and diagnostics centers.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the matters related to the Ministry of National Health Services, instructed to formulate a strategy to build the said tower through the public-private partnership.

Highlighting the significant responsibilities of the health sector to save human lives, the prime minister expressed his concerns about the reported new polio cases in the country and resolved the elimination of the disease by utilising all-out resources in collaboration with partners.

He also called for carrying out the third-party audit of the laboratories working under the purview of the Ministry of National Health Services, besides appointing well-qualified health professionals in the ministry and its allied departments.

Vowing to personally monitor health-related matters, Prime Minister Shehbaz also ordered the third-party audit of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan and the formulation of a strategy to bifurcate the drug processing from the Authority.

Besides, he also instructed outsourcing the human resource of all government hospitals in Islamabad and their waste treatment plants, besides the audit of countrywide nursing schools and colleges.

During the briefing, the prime minister was told that a National Blood

Transfusion and Blood Products Policy would be introduced soon, and work on a nursing and midwifery policy framework was in the final stage.

It was told that an evening shift was being introduced in the nursing colleges to increase the number of graduates. Moreover, work on a revised National Action Plan 2025-30 has been started to control the population growth.

As the prime minister was told about the installation of new health equipment worth Rs 711 million in Islamabad's hospitals, he instructed the third-party audit of the purchase of the said equipment.

It was informed that a modern hospital management system would be installed in Islamabad's hospitals and that waste management plants were operating in the capital city's five public and four private sector hospitals.



Senator Bushra Anjum Butt, presiding over a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education after being elected as chairperson of the Committee at Parliament House Islamabad.

Ambassador of Turkmenistan visits AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ambassador of Turkmenistan, Atadjan Movlamov, visited Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and met with Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood.

During the meeting, Mr. Movlamov discussed the potential for enhanced mutual understanding and relations between Pakistan and Turkmenistan.

Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood expressed the deep historical and cultural ties between the two countries and emphasized the mutual respect and affection between the people of Pakistan and Turkmenistan. He also proposed the establishment of a special section in the AIOU History Museum dedicated to showcasing the literature and work of Turkmenistani poets.

Loader Rickshaw distribution PRCS empowers flood-affected families with livelihood assistance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the leadership of Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), on Wednesday has successfully distributed 210 loader rickshaws among the families affected by the monsoon floods of 2022. This initiative is crucial part of PRCS's Livelihood Assistance Program during the Recovery Phase.

The loader rickshaws have been allocated to deserving families in five districts of Sindh province, including Dadu, Khairpur, Shikarpur, Larkana, and Qambar Shahdadkot, with each district receiving 35 rickshaws. Additionally, 35 loader rickshaws were distributed in Jaffarabad district of Balochistan.

The distribution of loader rickshaws in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will take place after Eid-ul-Adha. This initiative aims to strengthen the affected communities by providing a source of income. It is part of PRCS's ongoing efforts to empower communities to regain their livelihoods and move towards a brighter future. The distribution ceremonies were attended by Secretary General PRCS, Muhammad Abaidullah Khan, Dr. Asfar Shams, Health Coordinator, IFRC Country Delegation Pakistan, officials from the provincial and district branches of PRCS and IFRC Country Delegation, volunteers, community members and local notables.

Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari praised the relentless dedication of PRCS staff and volunteers, who continue to provide crucial support to flood-affected communities. He emphasized PRCS's steadfast commitment to restoring normalcy through multifaceted programs, including livelihood assistance, shelter construction, cash assistance, and health and hygiene initiatives.

"We remain dedicated to our mission of serving humanity and stand ready to support communities in their journey towards recovery and resilience," Chairman Laghari stated.

MORA advises Pakistani pilgrims to strictly adhere to Saudi laws during Hajj

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony (MORA) on Wednesday advised Pakistani pilgrims to comply fully with Saudi regulations, particularly during the Hajj days in Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifa and Jamarat.

Issuing an advisory ahead of Hajj starting from 8th Zilhajj (June 14 - Friday), Secretary Religious Affairs Zulfiqar Haider emphasized the importance of following the instructions of Saudi authorities without argument. "At the holy sites, including Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifa, and Jamarat, all arrangements during the Hajj days are managed by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and its approved Makaanatib."

Haider also advised pilgrims to avoid all political and communal discussions and debates, as well as participation in banned activities such as political meetings, processions or protests.

He warned Pakistani pilgrims that violating Saudi laws and engaging in prohibited activities could bring a bad name for the country, and stressed that individuals would be responsible for their own actions.

3 sanitary workers asphyxiated by toxic gases in well

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three sanitation workers died due to toxic gases in a well in Bhulwal Tehsil, Sargodha on Wednesday.

According to a private news channel, rescue 1122 said the workers entered a well to clear it but they fainted due to toxic gases as soon as they entered it. They were already dead when the rescuers pulled them out.

The dead bodies were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Islamabad police nab three members of impersonation gang

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The Industrial Area police station has arrested a three-member gang involved in impersonating government officials and robbing citizens. The accused, identified as Sardar Ali Khan, Mani Gul, and Shahzada Ismail, were found to be in possession of a vehicle and weapons used in the crimes.

According to police sources, Mani Gul is also wanted in a murder case in Tarnol. The gang has a previous record of involvement in multiple crimes.

The police have recovered evidence and will present it in court to ensure the accused receive appropriate punishment. DIG Islamabad, Syed Ali Raza, has assured citizens that those who rob them of their valuables will not escape the law.

"This arrest is a significant breakthrough in our efforts to combat crime in the city," said DIG Raza. "We will continue to work tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of our citizens."



ISLAMABAD: Police officials carrying bags of budget documents arrive at the National Assembly before Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presents the country's annual budget for fiscal year 2024-25.

Irfan elected unopposed as Chairman of Senate foreign affairs committee

ISLAMABAD (APP): The nomination was seconded by PPP Senator Rana Mehmoodul Hasan and PML-N Senator Dr. Afanullah Khan.

In a meeting attended by six members, including Sherry Rehman, Rana Mehmoodul Hasan, Rubina Qaimkhani, and Afanullah Khan, endorsed Irfan Siddiqui.

PTI Senators Ali Zafar and Liaquat Khan Tarakai abstained from voting but expressed their support for post-election.

Ali Zafar commented, "If it weren't for our ongoing political issues, I would have personally nominated Senator Irfan Siddiqui for the chairmanship."



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence & Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Belarus, Andrei Metelitsa.

Committee recommends closure, merger of some govt entities; contributory pension for new employees

ISLAMABAD (APP): The committee constituted to reduce the government's expenditures recommended on Wednesday to close, merge, or hand over some government departments to provinces, introduce a contributory pension mechanism for newly-appointed employees, and abolish the vacancies lying vacant for over a year.

Headed by the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission and comprising federal Cabinet, Establishment, and Power secretaries, Dr Qaiser Bangali, Dr Farrukh Saleem and Muhammad Naveed

Iftikhar, presented its preliminary report to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif containing its short- and medium-term recommendations at a meeting to discuss the reduction in government's expenses and the size of its infrastructure. The committee suggested engaging the private sector for service delivery in the government departments, besides banning unnecessary travel of government officials to reduce expenditures by promoting teleconferencing. Moreover, the government vehicles should be withdrawn from the officers availing the monetization facility, it added.

IGP Islamabad addresses police officials' concerns

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, held an orderly room at Central Police Office Islamabad, to ensure timely and prioritized resolution of institutional and personal matters concerning police officers.

The establishment of an orderly room aims to pri-



oritize and address issues faced by police officers on a timely basis, emphasizing their welfare and issue resolution. The orderly room was attended by all divisions' police officers.

During the orderly room, police officers brought forth both personal and official concerns before the IGP Islamabad. He directed the senior police officers to complete re-in-

Pak to host Global Conference on Girls' Education in September

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with Rabta Alaam Islami (Muslim World League), is set to host a landmark Global Conference on Girls' Education this September 2024.

This prestigious event aims to bring together a diverse group of international and national dignitaries, including education ministers from numerous Islamic countries, to address and find solutions to the numerous challenges faced by girls in the education sector, according to a press release issued here yesterday.

The primary objective of the three-day conference is to explore and formulate effective strategies to en-

able institutional responses and ensure better resource allocation for promoting girls' education on a global scale. The conference will see the participation of eminent scholars, education experts, policymakers, and various stakeholders who will share their expertise, experiences, and best practices in the field of girls' education. Prime Minister has established a dedicated committee to ensure the event is organized in a befitting and efficient manner. This committee is headed by Mohyuddin Wani, Secretary of Education, and includes Ms Nausheen Iftikhar MNA, Ms Dr Tanveer Anjum representatives from the Foreign Office.